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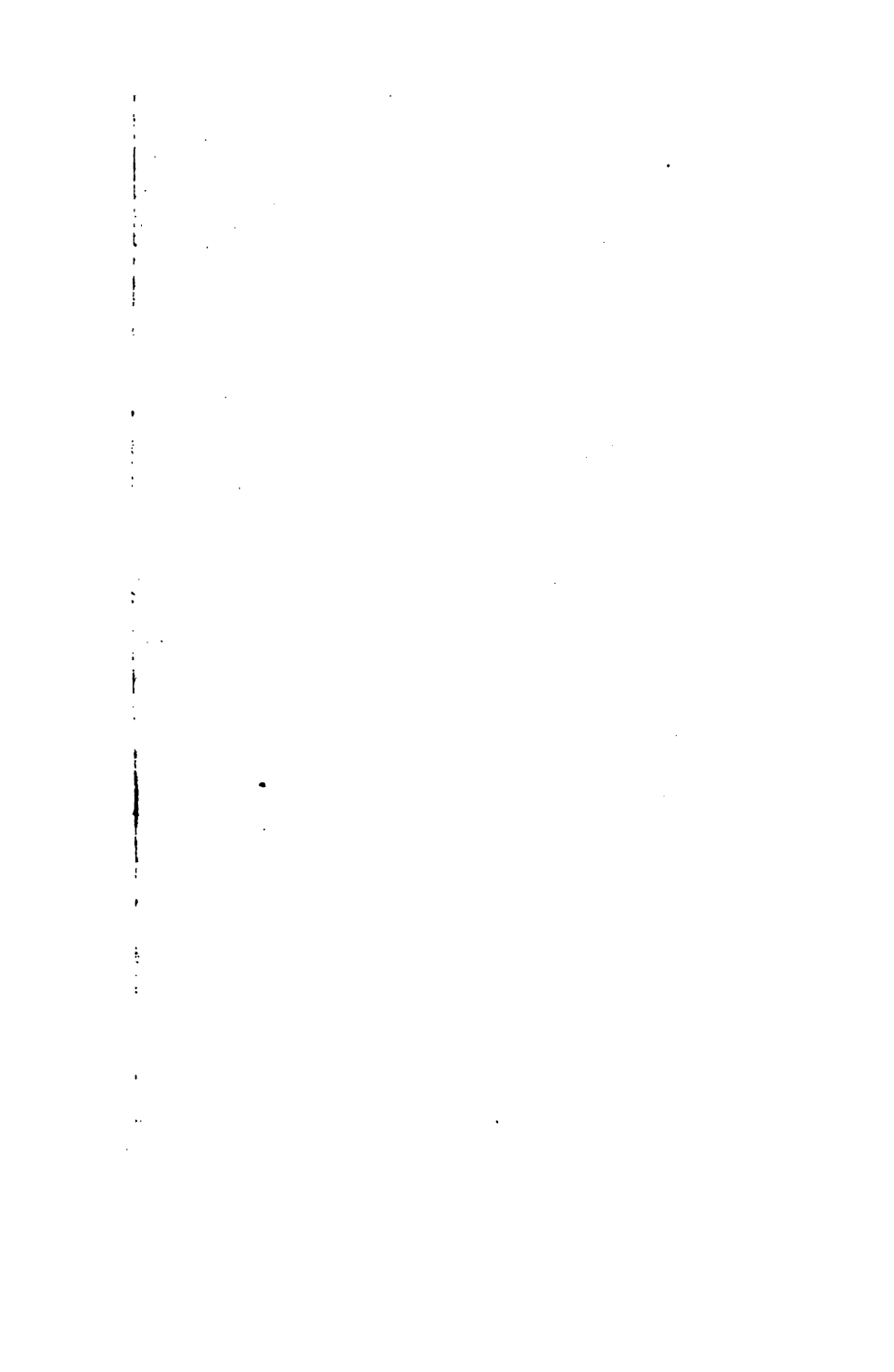






157

160



Warnings
OF
The Holy Week,
&c.

BEING A COURSE OF
PAROCHIAL LECTURES
FOR
The Week before Easter,
AND THE
Easter Festivals.

BY THE
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TO THE
PARISHIONERS
OF
ST. PETER'S IN THE EAST, OXFORD,
IN GRATEFUL REMEMBRANCE
OF THE DAYS OF HIS MINISTRY AMONG THEM,
THIS VOLUME IS INSCRIBED,
BY
THE AUTHOR.

ADVERTISEMENT.

THE substance of the following course of Lectures was preached by the Author in the parish church of St. Peter in the East, Oxford, during the Holy Week of 1842. They have since been revised, with a view to publication, though, in some few instances, the allusions to the particular circumstances of the congregation to whom they were then addressed have been retained. To the Lecture for each day has been prefixed the Gospel narrative of the events to which allusion

is made in it; and which originally formed the subject of a catechetical examination that preceded it. As the Lectures themselves are altogether of a practical character, Mr. Greswell's harmony has been followed in the time and order of the events, without entering into any question of Biblical criticism.

Bonchurch,
St. Matthias' Day, 1847.

CONTENTS.

Sunday next before Easter.

	PAGE
The Events of the Sunday	1
LECTURE I.—The Warning given at Bethany . . .	3

Monday before Easter.

The Events of the Monday	23
LECTURE II.—The Warning of the Day of Excitement	27

Tuesday before Easter.

The Events of the Tuesday	43
LECTURE III.—The Warning of the Day of Chastisement	45

Wednesday before Easter.

The Events of the Wednesday	65
LECTURE IV.—The Warning of the Fig Tree . . .	81

Thursday before Easter.

	PAGE
The Events of the Thursday	97
LECTURE V.—The Warning of Judas	101

Good Friday.

The Trial of our Lord before Pilate	127
LECTURE VI.—The Warning of Pilate	137

Easter Eve.

The Events of Easter Eve	165
LECTURE VII.—The Day of Rest	167

Easter Day.

The Vision at the Holy Sepulchre	183
LECTURE VIII.—The Signs of our Lord's Presence	185

Easter Monday.

The Journey to Emmaus (on Easter Day)	199
LECTURE IX.—The Remedy for Anxious Thoughts.	203

Easter Tuesday.

Our Lord's Manifestation to St. Thomas (on the first Sunday after Easter)	223
LECTURE X.—Comfort under Despondency	225

Sunday next before Easter.

THE EVENTS OF THE SUNDAY.

“THEN Jesus six days before the passover John xii came to Bethany, where Lazarus was which had been dead, whom he raised from the dead.”

“And being in Bethany, in the house Mark xi 3—9. of Simon the leper, as he sat at meat, there came a woman having an alabaster box of ointment of spikenard very precious; and she brake the box, and poured it on his head.

And there were some that had indignation within themselves, and said, Why was this waste of the ointment made?

For it might have been sold for more

2 THE EVENTS OF THE SUNDAY.

than three hundred pence, and have been given to the poor. And they murmured against her.

And Jesus said, Let her alone; why trouble ye her? She hath wrought a good work on me.

For ye have the poor with you always, and whensoever ye will ye may do them good: but me ye have not always.

She hath done what she could: she is come aforehand to anoint my body to the burying.

Verily I say unto you, Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, this also that she hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her."

See also Matt. xxvi. 6—13.

Luke xix. 28.

John xi. 55—xii. 11.

LECTURE I.

THE WARNING GIVEN AT BETHANY.

MARK xiv. 7.

“Ye have the poor with you always, and whensoever ye will ye may do them good: but me ye have not always.”

THESE words form in themselves an apt introduction to the closing scenes of our Lord's ministry; they were doubtless intended to forewarn the disciples of His approaching death. We find a yet clearer intimation of it in the following verse: —“She is come aforehand to anoint My body to the burying.” And it is probably from its immediate connexion with our

Saviour's betrayal and crucifixion, that St. Matthew and St. Mark introduce the Supper at Bethany amongst the events of the Thursday; for it would seem to have been on the preceding Sunday that it actually occurred. St. John expressly tells us, that the time at which Jesus came to Bethany was "six days before the passover."

It is the latter reason that has led me to choose these words as an introduction to the present course of lectures. For my design in them is to consider, day by day, the several events of the last week of our Lord's ministry. Of course the narrative of the crucifixion itself, which every morning the Gospels bring before us in the Church Service, must shed its colouring upon them all. But, as far as is possible, I would limit our attention on the Monday to what happened on the Monday; on the Tuesday, to what happened on the Tuesday, and so with the rest. Neither even thus shall we be able to dwell upon

every incident; we must be content for the most part to follow the brief narrative of St. Mark, and select some one event, as giving a distinct warning on each successive day. It is a subject far less awful than the more direct contemplation of the Passion of Christ; and yet move where we will at this period, we keep continually treading on the borders of that holy ground, and so must advance with a most cautious and reverent step. On Monday, the triumphal entry into Jerusalem; on Tuesday, the purifying of the temple; on Wednesday, the withered fig-tree; on Thursday, the treachery of Judas; on Friday, the haltings of Pilate, and afterwards the sorrows and anxieties of the faithful followers of Christ—every word, and every incident—bear deeply stamped upon them the image of the cross, though very few will reflect the brightness of the Easter sun. They speak to us again and again, of blessings, warnings, and privileges; but it is for the most part of privileges neglected,

warnings disregarded, and blessings forfeited. May God give us grace so to meditate upon them, that the lessons which they teach may not be without profit to ourselves !

In the present Lecture, which will be introductory to the rest, I propose in the first place, to consider the feelings with which the Jews regarded our Lord at the close of His ministry ; Secondly, to inquire how far our opportunities, and our neglect of them, may resemble theirs ; and lastly, to apply to ourselves the warning of our Saviour's words.

First, then, as regards the Jews themselves. Their rejection of the Messiah may, when we consider fully the evidence vouchsafed to them, appear to us not only a very awful act of sin, but an almost unaccountable one. When we read the Gospel narrative, we are apt to imagine that the conduct of mankind in general would under a like trial have been very different from theirs.

At the time of our Lord's birth holy Angels had spoken with men; the shepherds had spread far and wide the tidings which they had heard; Simeon and Anna had publicly recognized Him in the temple; even the heathen had come from the distant east to inquire after one who was born King of the Jews; we are expressly told, that not only Herod himself, but all Jerusalem was troubled at their coming¹; and yet these events appear to have passed quietly away without creating any real or lasting impression at all. So also during His ministry, our Lord Himself wrought continual miracles; He spake as never man spake; and from time to time a mysterious power seems to have emanated from His own person which His adversaries could neither gainsay nor resist. And yet, in spite of these signs and wonders, He made but few converts; and the greater part of those who had opportunities of observing Him

¹ Matt. ii. 3.

most closely were unconvinced by His teaching, and remained to the last in a state of doubt whether He were the Christ or not.

This, then, even of itself, is a circumstance that we cannot but regard with wonder. But that wonder must be greatly increased when we take further into consideration, that the Jews at this period were in actual expectation of the Advent of Christ. Not only did the volume of prophecy turn the thoughts of reflecting minds in that direction; but the pressure of the Roman power made it a subject of popular feeling. Their hopes and wishes as a nation were centred in this event; and they were listening for the slightest sound that might give them notice of its approach: thus, though John the Baptist wrought no miracle in support of his mission, and though his preaching was of a stern and repulsive character, yet we are told that there "went out to him Jerusalem, and all Judea, and all the region

round about Jordan, and were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins²." So great was the sensation produced by his simple assertion that the kingdom of Heaven was at hand. And St. Luke gives us the cause of this. He tells us that the "people were in expectation, and all men mused in their hearts of John, whether he were the Christ or not³." Nay, so very eager were they to hasten the Advent by themselves assuming him to be so, that he was obliged to declare to them again and again, in express terms, that he was not the Christ, and that there was One coming after him Who would be preferred before him.

How, then, are we to account for this apparent change in the national feeling? By what singular delusion was it that the very same multitude who crowded thus eagerly to the preaching of St. John, at the end of three years, doubted, distrusted,

² Matt. iii. 5, 6.

³ Luke iii. 15.

and finally rejected, the Messiah? We know, indeed, that such deadness of soul must be regarded as a visitation from God, and the most fearful of all the judgments that He inflicts upon man. After a nation or an individual have gone on for a long time, refusing to see, and to hear, and to be converted, He Himself will harden the heart, and render the eye blind, and the ear dull. And such undoubtedly was the case when the day of their visitation had gone by. But I believe we may trace, in the present instance, the gradual and visible working of this law. We shall find a like inconsistency in the varied events of Passion Week itself; and they afford us an answer to the question, which we will in part anticipate now.

The Jews, at the close of our Lord's ministry, regarded His words and works with apathy and indifference, because they had become accustomed to them. At the commencement of His preaching, they appear to have been by no means unmoved

by His presence. On the contrary, we find that they assembled in great crowds to hear Him, and were astonished at His doctrine, and marvelled at His miracles. And we may conjecture that by far the greater number were disposed to believe that He was indeed the Christ, and were only waiting for a fit opportunity to declare themselves His disciples. I do not, however, mean that they had formed any fixed or definite purpose of doing so; on the contrary, they went on as if there was no occasion to come to any immediate decision at all; they acted as though our Lord would always be with them, and that whenever they would, they might make choice of His service. And while they thus tarried, their minds gradually accommodated themselves to the existing state of things; the impression produced by the oft-repeated warnings became more faint and transient than before; the miracles, which they had witnessed again and again, were to them no longer miracles, simply

because they had witnessed them so very often ; they wished for some new evidence, and at length openly demanded a sign from heaven, as though the signs and wonders which daily encompassed them upon earth, were insufficient to guide them to the truth. And so it was, that they went on professing to expect the Messiah, and doubting and wondering, even while He was living among them, and each succeeding day made them only less conscious of His presence. The Kingdom of Heaven had, as it were, come upon them, and startled them at first, and then had enveloped them in an atmosphere of its own ; and in a little while, they had become used to that atmosphere, and thought that there had been no change, and knew not that it was already passing away.

This was the general feeling ; some few undoubtedly there were, whose thoughts were very different : such were St. Peter, and St. James, and St. John, and St. Matthew, and the guileless Nathanael, and

the rest of the little flock, who were converted by our Lord's preaching upon earth. But their conduct had been very different also; they had obeyed without hesitation His first command; they had believed without doubtfulness His first sign. They had not waited in the expectation of hearing or seeing greater things, but had acted at once on what they heard and saw. While their feelings were yet fresh, they had given them a life and reality, by suffering them to influence their practice. They had forsaken all, and followed Christ the very moment that He called them, and then had walked quietly onward in the same path which they once for all had chosen for their own. Still, however, in one respect, their feelings would seem to have resembled those of the thoughtless multitude,—they too had become so habituated to our Lord's presence, that they could not realize the thought of His being a little while taken away. And it was to them, therefore, no less than to the rest, that the

warning at the supper at Bethany was given. And yet here again they differed from the others; for while they were looking forward in hope to their Lord's continuance with them on the morrow, they did not, on this account, neglect the blessings and privileges of the day.

Such was the state of feeling at Jerusalem, at the close of our Lord's earthly ministry. But we must now pass on from it, and consider, in the second place, how far our own opportunities and the neglect of them may resemble those of the Jews. There are, indeed, more points of contrast than of resemblance between us and them. We differ from them in that Christ has been preaching to us, not for three years only, but all our life long. We differ also in that the choice of His service has not been left in our own hands; it was made for us at our baptism; while we were yet infants others came forward, and promised and vowed in our name that we would forsake all and follow

Him. At that hour the kingdom of God came upon us; and it may be said, with a far deeper meaning of ourselves than of the Jews, that it enveloped us in an atmosphere of its own. We were regenerated by the Holy Spirit of God; we became members of a Christian Church; and have from thenceforth grown up in the midst of its privileges and its blessings.

If, then, these exercise no practical influence on our hearts, we may cease to wonder at the unbelief of the children of Israel. We may, indeed, imagine that a visible miracle, wrought before our eyes, could not fail to affect our lives. Yet there is no evidence, that it could afford, which we do not already enjoy. I am speaking of professing Christians—the record of past miracles is ours; nay, there is a miracle in each Article of the Creed that we hold, and one that must come more closely home to us than any mere external sign. We do not doubt the truth of Christianity; we do not doubt

that there is a heaven and a hell ; we do not doubt that the only safe path is that pointed out to us by the Gospel ; and that the path of sin must bring us in the end to everlasting death. Why, then, should we expect any outward manifestation of God's power to do more for us than His inward working upon our own minds ? If this be our excuse for delay, surely it resembles that of the Jews, who in the midst of daily miracles withheld their belief because they waited for a sign. Or rather our folly is far greater than theirs, for they sought a sign from heaven, because the wonders which they witnessed were wrought visibly upon earth ; while we require a miracle upon earth, because we are dissatisfied with the signs given us from Heaven.

It may be, that if our own life were written by the pen of inspiration, and every season at which our Saviour had called us, and every sign He had given us of His presence, were brought in a moment before

our eyes; and if in addition to this, we could recall our own feelings also, and remember how often we were on the point of following Him, and doubted, and wavered, and postponed the good resolution, until its freshness had passed away; and how we then gradually became more cold and indifferent until spiritual signs and warnings ceased to influence us as they once had done;—it may be, I say, if such a history were set before us, we should find in it only too clear and faithful an image of the same inconsistency which excites our wonder in the children of Israel.

Since, then, there may haply be this resemblance, let us, in conclusion, apply to ourselves at the present season the warning our Saviour addressed to them, “The poor ye have always with you, but Me ye have not always.” Of course, in their exact and literal meaning, there is no period at which these words will apply directly to ourselves. The event to

which they refer is already past. Our Lord will be always with His Church, in the way in which He is with it now. We may indeed leave Him, but on His part there will be no more change. He will never leave us as He did His disciples when He went away from them for a little while to hide Himself in the grave. If we look for Him He is always with us: with us in His house of prayer; with us in His word and sacraments; nay, with us also in the daily walk of life. For whatever be our rank and station, we have the poor and destitute around us, and so long as they are always with us, our Saviour is with us also.

But though Christ is thus always and everywhere present in His Church, still there are times at which we, in a special manner, feel His nearness to us; and under this view we may apply the warning given at Bethany to the anniversary of His passion. He will not be always with us as He has been during the forty days that are

now drawing to a close ; still less shall we be able at all times to realize His presence as we can in the solemn services by which we commemorate His sufferings and death. This at least is a season in which we may set aside our usual cares, relinquish our usual pleasures, and interrupt our usual business ; because they are always with us, and, whensoever we will, we may resume them : but the week of our Lord's passion is not always.—It is a season in which, if we have hitherto been wavering, we receive a new call to follow Christ ; and if we have long since been among the number of His disciples, it is a season for making efforts of greater zeal, and devoting ourselves more entirely to His service.

Lastly, let us remember that those who heard the warning at Bethany could not have imagined its accomplishment to be near at hand ; even Mary herself was in all probability ignorant of the purport of her own action : she obeyed the stirrings

of the Spirit within her, but it does not follow that she was aware of the nature of the service which she had performed. And the other disciples complained of the profusion of her gift; they did not know that she had "come aforehand to anoint for the burying" the body of Christ; they did not know that it was the last occasion on which that solemn office could be performed. ⁵ On the following Sunday other spices and ointments had been prepared, but it was too late to offer them then. During the brief interval our Lord had died, and been buried, and broken the bonds of death. His earthly ministry was at an end: to those who yet wavered in their choice, no less than to those who had availed themselves of it, and to those who had rejected it, it had for ever passed away. It is a solemn thought that a change so great and fearful should have

⁴ Mark xiv. 8.

⁵ Luke xxiv. 1.

come thus unexpectedly upon them; yet our last Passion Week may come as unexpectedly upon us; and if it leave us with our purpose yet wavering, it must undoubtedly bring with it a greater and more fearful change. Let us then, like Mary, while we have yet time, do what we can in the service of Christ. Let us render unto Him with no grudging hand of our riches, our talents, and our prayers. Do not let us venture so to worship Him as those who may supply on the morrow the deficiencies of the day; the present week, nay rather the present hour, is all that we can really call our own. "Yet a little while the light is with us. And we must walk while we have yet the light, lest darkness come on us." It is true indeed (praised be God!) that death itself need no longer separate us from Christ. But it is in this life only that we can make choice of His service; those opportunities of working out our salvation will not be always with us, which are with us now.

22 THE WARNING GIVEN AT BETHANY.

Sooner or later the night will close in upon us, and take them away, and if haply it find us unprepared, they will be lost to us for ever.

Monday before Easter.

THE EVENTS OF THE MONDAY.

“ON the next day, much people that ^{John xii.} were come to the feast, when they heard ^{12, 13.} that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem,

Took branches of palm-trees, and went forth to meet him, and cried, Hosanna: Blessed is the King of Israel, that cometh in the name of the Lord.”

“And when they came nigh to Jerusa- ^{Mark xi.} lem, unto Bethphage and Bethany, at the ^{1—8.} mount of Olives, he sendeth forth two of his disciples,

And saith unto them, Go your way into the village over against you: and as soon as ye be entered into it, ye shall find a colt

tied, whereon never man sat; loose him, and bring him.

And if any man say unto you, Why do ye this? say ye that the Lord hath need of him; and straightway he will send him hither.

And they went their way, and found the colt tied by the door without in a place where two ways met; and they loose him.

And certain of them that stood there, said unto them, What do ye, loosing the colt?

And they said unto them even as Jesus had commanded: and they let them go.

And they brought the colt to Jesus, and cast their garments on him; and he sat upon him.

And many spread their garments in the way: and others cut down branches off the trees, and strawed them in the way."

Luke xix.
37—40.

"And when he was come nigh, even now at the descent of the mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to rejoice, and praise God with a loud

voice for all the mighty works that they had seen ;

Saying, Blessed be the King that cometh in the name of the Lord : peace in heaven, and glory in the highest.

And some of the Pharisees from among the multitude said unto him, Master, rebuke thy disciples.

And he answered and said unto them, I tell you, that if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out."

"And they that went before, and they that followed, cried, saying, Hosanna ; Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord. Mark xi. 9, 10.

Blessed be the kingdom of our father David, that cometh in the name of the Lord ; Hosanna in the highest."

"And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it, Luke xix. 41-44.

Saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which

belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes.

For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side,

And shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation.”

11. ^{Mark xi.} “And Jesus entered into Jerusalem, and into the temple: and when he had looked round about upon all things, and now the even-tide was come, he went out unto Bethany with the twelve.”

See also Matt. xxi. 1—11, 14—17.

Luke xix. 29—44.

John xii. 12—36.

LECTURE II.

THE WARNING OF THE DAY OF EXCITEMENT.

MARK xi. 9.

“ And they that went before, and they that followed, cried, saying, Hosanna ; Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.”

THE principal event of the Monday in Passion Week is the triumphal entry into Jerusalem. It is the only one recorded by St. Mark. And if we limit ourselves to his narrative, this one day presents a marked contrast to all the rest. There was so general a feeling of agitation and excitement, that the Jewish nation appeared for a little while to recognize in Jesus the promised

Christ. He came, indeed, in Himself still meek and lowly ; but, so far as the people were concerned, with all the outward signs of taking possession of His kingdom. Branches of palm trees were strewed in the way ; the air was filled with shouts and acclamations as He passed along ; and when at length He arrived at Jerusalem, St. Matthew adds, that " all the city was moved, saying, Who is this ? and the multitude said, This is Jesus the prophet of Nazareth of Galilee ¹."

This, then, is an instance of the inconsistency to which I alluded in the former lecture. We should hardly expect a scene of this description to commence Passion Week, and to be separated from the crucifixion by a brief interval of four days. Yet such undoubtedly was the case. Neither will it be necessary to look back upon it from that event, in order to remind ourselves of its transitory character. St. Luke

¹ Matt. xxi. 10, 11.

has added to the history of the day itself, its own warning. We find in his Gospel two circumstances omitted by the other evangelists: the one speaks to us of the cause of this popular outbreak, the other of the judgment which followed when it passed away without effect. It was for this reason that I inserted them in the narrative; and I now proceed to consider them separately.

He tells us, that when certain of the Pharisees heard the acclamations of the people, they said to our Lord, "Master, rebuke Thy disciples." Now it would doubtless have been in accordance with the usual tenor of His ministry, to have suppressed any such display of popular feeling. But on the present occasion He refused to do so. He suffered it to take its course, and His only answer was, "I tell you, that if these were to hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out." We may then gather from these words, whatever deeper meaning they may

contain, that both the disciples and the multitude were on this day giving way to an impulse which for the time they were unable to resist. The Holy Spirit was stirring their hearts within them to receive their King. There was a prophecy that it would be so. Zechariah had written, "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem; behold, thy King cometh unto thee; He is just and having salvation; lowly and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt, the foal of an ass²." And with a view to its fulfilment, God breathed life and energy into the cold and wavering multitude. Had their hearts, like those of the Pharisees, been so entirely hardened that they had withstood its influence, God would only have made choice of other instruments to fulfil His purpose. He would, by a more visible act of power, have awakened the very ground beneath their feet, and the

² Zech. ix. 9.

stones would have received a voice to give that welcome to the Messiah, which was denied to Him by man.

This, then, was the cause of the outbreak of feeling which marked our Lord's appearance this day. God, more than four hundred years before, by the mouth of His prophet, had commanded the daughter of Jerusalem to rejoice; and therefore she did rejoice when the appointed season came. We cannot now tell in what higher sense these words might have been fulfilled, if the children of Israel had not rejected Christ. Doubtless the character of their joy, as well as the consequences to which it led, was affected by the unprepared state of their own hearts. But the joy itself was given them by God in accordance with the prediction of Zechariah. And it is ever thus that the shadows of prophecy form themselves into the events of history; the source from which they proceed is one and unchanging, but they vary in shape and

colouring according to the surface on which they fall.

Let us now pass on to the other circumstance recorded by St. Luke, which gives its warning to the day. He tells us that when our Lord was come near, He beheld the city and wept over it, saying, "If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong to thy peace! but now are they hid from thine eyes." None can fail to be struck by the contrast between the scene itself and these solemn words. The branches of the palm tree were still unwithered, and the echo of the hosannas had not died away, when our Lord was thus weeping over the departed glory of Jerusalem. And why was this? Doubtless it was because He could read the heart, and saw that the feelings of the people were in themselves more frail and perishable even than the outward symbols which they had called forth. He knew that it was the day of their visitation, the season in which the

Holy Spirit was calling upon them to welcome Him as the Christ; and He knew also that the excitement, which it had caused, was passing away without producing any lasting impressions on their minds. Nay more, He could look beyond the present hour, and see how their neglected blessing must become a curse; and their thoughts which were now so highly strung, would fly back in an opposite direction, and lead to darker sins than they had contemplated before. And under this view, the excitement of the Monday formed a meet introduction to the clamorous demand for the crucifixion of Christ. The one followed from the other by what men call a reaction of feeling: I say that men so call it; for Holy Scripture teaches us to take a deeper view, and to recognize in the change the return of the evil spirit to his deserted abode. Satan had been forced to abandon his hold on the hearts of the people for the brief period during which they rejoiced in the Lord; but

when he saw that the joy passed away in a mere outbreak of feeling, and led to no act of self-devotion, no real abiding faith, no sincerity of repentance, or earnestness of prayer,—when, in a word, he found that the house, from whence he had been driven, had merely been swept and garnished, and then left empty—he came back again with a seven-fold power, and the spiritual state of the children of Israel was far worse than it had been before he had been driven away.

It was this foreknowledge which rendered the day of our Lord's seeming triumph a day of sorrow to Himself; not all the unbelief and hardness of heart, which for three long years He had witnessed, not all the taunts and blasphemy which in a few days He was destined to endure, called forth the same outward expression of grief as this entry into Jerusalem; and the traces of those tears may be said, from that hour, to have remained upon the day itself. We now go forth at this season to meet

Christ, "not with palm branches in our hands, but with alms-deeds, and fastings, and tears, and watchings, and all kinds of piety, which we offer to our Lord ³." The procession is no longer one of triumph, there are no green leaves upon the ground, no shouts and acclamations in the air. But the anniversary of the day brings with it only sad and solemn thoughts, and stands at the threshold of a week of fasting and prayer.

In consequence of this change, the event of the Monday has no peculiar application to the present season; there is indeed a time when we as a nation resemble the Jews in our outward celebration of the coming of Christ; when the evergreens in our churches, and the songs in the streets and ways, and the greetings of friends, and thoughts and looks of love and gladness, compel us for a while to lay aside our worldly occupations, and yield to the cheering influence of Christian joy.

³ Chrys. Hom. in Ps. cxlv.

These are now the signs of Christmas Day, and bring most vividly before us the triumphal entry into Jerusalem. It is then that the Church may be said to gladden the world. Other fasts and festivals may be disregarded by the multitude, just as the Jews disregarded the other marked times and seasons of our Lord's earthly ministry. But there are comparatively few who neglect to rejoice on Christmas Day. It is then, therefore, that it is more especially good for us to meditate on the scene that we have now been considering, and to remember that our feelings of joy and gladness may, like those of the children of Israel, be a cause of sorrow to our Lord.

Still, however, though the image of the day of the excitement is stamped upon Christmas rather than Lent, the warning connected with it is applicable to all times and seasons, and I will conclude with a few practical observations upon it.

1. The events of Monday in Passion Week point out to us the true view that

must be taken of feelings of religious excitement. There must be few, I think, whose own experience has not told them that there is a kind of ebb and flow in their spiritual being. There are times in which our hearts seem as it were to open; and the cloud of selfishness is removed from them. We feel, perhaps, a more real compassion for the poor, or a warmer interest in the progress of the gospel, or a more earnest desire to profit by the means of grace which the Church affords us; and if we were to follow our first impulse, we should make some change in our conduct, perhaps some sacrifice of worldly interest, for the sake of Christ. It matters not from whence these feelings have their origin; they may be the blessed fruit of prayer, or of holy communion, or of confirmation; or again they may arise from some impressive sermon; or we may, like the Jews, simply rejoice in the Lord we know not why. But from whatever source they come, and however strong and vivid they may be, we

must expect them to be transitory. They are the gifts of God ; while they remain, they are undoubtedly a high privilege ; when they are gone, they will prove a blessing or a burthen, according to the manner in which we have received them. They are no test of our spiritual condition. Their mere presence is not of itself even a temporary sign of our Lord's approbation. It is possible that He may look down from heaven with sorrow upon our joy. Still less are they a proof that our hearts are tender, and anxious to receive Him. They merely mark, as it were, the hours of our day of visitation, and are an evidence that the Spirit of God is yet striving with us, in despite of our sins.

2. Since then the feelings themselves are thus transitory, the only way in which we can render them of lasting benefit to our souls is by acting upon them. It is not enough to indulge them, or to talk about them to others, or even to welcome them thankfully in our own hearts ; but we

must begin some course of conduct, or make some sacrifice of self, which will give them an abiding influence after they are gone.

For instance, we may imagine that each of the holy apostles was conscious of some inward stirring, similar to those of which we have been speaking, when they first heard the summons of our Lord. Their conversion does not seem to have been gradual. Christ called them—their hearts were prepared for Him, and they were moved to obey His voice, though they knew not why; they did not merely talk of their feelings, but they acted upon them. They arose, left all, and followed Him. Had they lingered till the morrow, they might perhaps have made a different choice; for the first impulse passed away, and doubts, and fears, and perplexities at times encompassed them in their after-path. But the sacrifice was already made; they had begun to follow Christ; and step by step He led them onward on their way; and

thus it was that, with one exception, they continued faithful even unto the end.

Or, to take the individual instance, to which I referred yesterday. Mary Magdalene, at the supper at Bethany, would appear to have acted from a religious impulse, when she poured the precious ointment on the feet of our Lord. Her conduct appeared strange and unreasonable to the other disciples, who did not share in the same feelings. They said truly that the ointment might have been sold for many pence, and given to the poor. We need not suppose that any except Judas urged this with insincerity. Their words were probably in accordance with what they felt; but Mary's action had been in accordance with what she felt also. She was conscious of a higher aspiration, and it led her to a deed of more entire self-devotion. She at once bestowed her all upon Christ; and her good work remained when the feeling which had prompted it had passed away.

3. Lastly, let us remember that these impulses, if we do not turn them into blessings, will prove burthens. They will leave us either better or worse than they find us. Satan watches them as well as God; and if they do not awaken us to hasten on our journey, they will expose us to new temptations where we stand. Thus it was with the children of Israel. They rejoiced in the day of their visitation; they felt that the Kingdom of Heaven had come very near, and waited perhaps to see what God was about to do for them. But, alas! they did not perceive that God's part was already done; that the feelings of the day were His and not theirs; and that if they would make them their own they must act upon them. And so it was that the good seed was scattered in vain, and their hearts only became the more barren and unfruitful by the brief interval of spiritual sunshine. At length the light passed away, and the hour of darkness arrived. And then Satan came to them instead of God,

and he in his turn put thoughts into their hearts; and these took root and sprung up quickly, and bore much fruit, and assumed a fearful life and reality by the crucifixion of their Redeemer. God grant that their example may not speak in vain to ourselves. Let us be careful at all times, and especially on solemn seasons such as this, that the stirrings of His Spirit may not leave our hearts empty when they pass away, and so open them to a fresh invasion of Satan, and prepare us to crucify our Saviour by some new act of sin.

Tuesday before Easter.

THE EVENTS OF THE TUESDAY.

“AND on the morrow, when they were come from Bethany, he was hungry : Mark xi. 12—18.

And seeing a fig-tree afar off, having leaves, he came, if haply he might find any thing thereon : and when he came to it, he found nothing but leaves ; for the time of figs was not yet.

And Jesus answered and said unto it, No man eat fruit of thee hereafter for ever. And his disciples heard it.

And they come to Jerusalem : and Jesus went into the temple, and began to cast out them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the

money-changers, and the seats of them that sold doves;

And would not suffer that any man should carry any vessel through the temple.

And he taught, saying unto them, Is it not written, My house shall be called of all nations the house of prayer? but ye have made it a den of thieves.

And the scribes and chief priests heard it, and sought how they might destroy him: for they feared him, because all the people was astonished at his doctrine.”

Luke xix.
7.

“And he taught them daily in the temple.”

Mark xi.
9.

“And when even was come, he went out of the city.”

See also Matt. xxi. 18—22. 12, 13.

Luke xix. 45—48.

LECTURE III.

THE WARNING OF THE DAY OF CHASTISE- MENT.

MARK xi. 15.

“ And Jesus went into the temple, and began to cast out them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the money changers, and the seats of them that sold doves.”

ON the evening after His triumphal entry into Jerusalem, our Lord returned to Bethany, and there passed the night. On the morrow He again visited the city ; but the excitement of yesterday would seem already to have died away, and on this occasion He was attended only by His

own disciples. We have, however, a distinct notice of this journey also; for we read that, while on the way thither, "He was hungry, and seeing a fig-tree afar off, having leaves, He came, if haply He might find any thing thereon." Now the leaves of common trees could not have appeared at this period, neither would their fruit be ripe till five months after the Passover. But the single tree which our Lord saw afar off had leaves, and this proved it to belong to a peculiar species, which ought never to be without fruit¹. It is called the ever-flourishing fig-tree, and is capable of bearing on its branches the produce of two seasons at a time. We must keep this in mind, that we may the more readily understand the typical character of this action of our Lord. For the fig-tree is the Jewish Church; the leaves are its privileges; the fruit, the faith and obedience which our Lord expected in return. And

¹ See Whitby's Note on this passage.

when He came to it, and found nothing but leaves, He answered and said unto it, "No man eat fruit of thee hereafter for ever. And His disciples heard it."

No other incident appears to have marked the present journey to Jerusalem; but after His arrival there, we read that Jesus "went into the temple, and began to cast out them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the money-changers, and the seats of them that sold doves; and would not suffer that any man should carry any vessel through the temple. And He taught, saying unto them, Is it not written, My house shall be called of all nations the house of prayer? but ye have made it a den of thieves." We are told further, that the people were astonished at His doctrine, and that the scribes and Pharisees feared Him, and sought how they might destroy Him; and it was probably for this reason, that when evening was come, He again went out of the city.

Thus then we find two events recorded by St. Mark of the Tuesday in Passion-week : they differ widely from each other in their external circumstances, and yet there is much of resemblance in their spiritual meaning. For both the fig-tree and the temple were but types of the barren and unholy state of the Jewish Church ; still, however, it will be well for us to consider them separately. Each in truth conveys its own warning ; the one of the great and final judgment, the other of the merciful chastisements of God. I do not, therefore, propose in the present Lecture to make further allusion to the fig-tree. For though it was as on this day, that our Lord came to it, looking for fruit, and finding none ; and though His curse is, as it were, now resting on its green leaves, and spreading boughs, it is not until the morrow that we see the consequences of that curse ; and it is then, therefore, that it is most fitting for us to dwell upon the warning which it gives us. Let us then for the present set it aside,

and consider by itself the other event, which occurred on the Tuesday; I mean, "the purifying of the temple."

Our Lord, during the whole period of His sojourn upon earth, was very frequently present in the temple at Jerusalem. His first coming was in infancy, when the holy Simeon was brought there by the Spirit to meet Him, and together with the prophetess Anna was enabled to recognize Him as the Christ. Again, He came there in His childhood, together with His parents, and after they went away, He remained by Himself; so that at the end of three days He was found by them sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them, and asking them questions. Neither was He on that occasion without witness, though Simeon and Anna were no longer there; for we are told that "all who heard Him, were astonished at His understanding and His answers." Again, we find from St. John's Gospel, that He came there at the commencement of His ministry, and

performed the same acts of power which He now repeated at its close. He found there "those that sold oxen, and sheep, and doves, and the changers of money, sitting; and when He had made a scourge of small cords, He drove them all out of the temple. . . . And said unto them that sold doves, Take these things hence; make not My Father's house a house of merchandize²." Neither were these three His only visits, though they especially are recorded from the remarkable circumstances that attended them. He was so continually there, that when the chief priests sent to apprehend Him, He appealed to the multitude, saying, "I sat daily with you, teaching in the temple, and ye laid no hold upon Me." And St. Luke adds expressly of this particular time, that "He taught them daily in the temple." Thus, His coming on the present occasion was no extraordinary occurrence; nay He had been there on the preceding day; and, as St.

² John ii. 14—16.

Mark tells us, had "looked around upon all things," as though in anticipation of the purifying of the morrow.

Let us then now enter with Him on the Tuesday morning, and endeavour to realize the scene which then occurred. The frequency of His visits would prevent any feeling of apprehension being caused by His arrival. All things were going on in their usual course; three years had passed away since He had come there with a scourge, and the effects of that scourging were obliterated and forgotten. The tables of the money-changers, and the seats of those who sold doves, stood in their former place; the people thronged around them, intent upon their bargaining; and the house of God had again become a house of merchandize, instead of a house of prayer.

Yet in the midst of their traffic it is probable that many spoke eagerly together of the events of yesterday;—the buyers would tell of the hosannas, and other signs

of popular enthusiasm, which had given so unexpected a fulfilment to a well-remembered prophecy; the sellers, in return, would speak of their own feelings when He entered the temple, and of the look which He had cast upon all things around. Some perhaps may have reasoned together, whether He were not indeed the Christ; and as they saw Him approach have hoped that some new sign or wonder would confirm the anticipation which they had already formed.

And a new sign undoubtedly was to be given them; but I do not believe that any one of those whom it concerned most nearly had conjectured its real character. There must in all probability have been some there who had felt his scourge on the former occasion, but since then they had gone on so long profaning His Father's house in His very presence, that their own daily traffic did not now occur to them as the reason of His coming.

Yet so it proved. Our Lord visited the

temple this day, in order that He might once more cast out from thence the persons by whom it was profaned. On a sudden, they felt his power. And just as yesterday multitudes had been moved to join in the general acclamations, they knew not why, so now the buyers and sellers were forced to fly from His presence in terror and shame. He willed that it should be so, and in an instant the unhallowed traffic was brought to an end. The tables of the money-changers and the seats of them that sold doves were overthrown; and that which had gradually become a house of merchandize resumed the appearance of a house of prayer.

And now let us go beyond the present week, and in a few words trace this subject to its conclusion. Our Lord only once after this visited the temple; and we do not ever read of his purifying it again. We cannot tell how brief the effects of the present chastisement may have been. Perhaps for a day or two the building

was left empty, swept and garnished. But doubtless before the end of the week, the evil spirits of worldly bartering had returned; the tables of the money-changers and the seats of those that sold doves were raised from the ground; the buyers and sellers had come back; and the busy hum of traffic was once more heard in the temple of the living God. From this time, year after year, all went quietly on. No one came with a scourge to disturb them again. They were permitted to continue their unhallowed gains without warning until the measure of their iniquity was full; and then an awful judgment was inflicted upon them instead of the merciful chastisement which our Lord had twice given them in vain. The abomination of desolation was set up in the holy place, and not one stone of the building which had been so long and so wantonly profaned was left upon another.

Surely we can have no difficulty in perceiving how this history of the Jewish

temple speaks in a voice of warning to the members of the Christian Church. That material building was, in all its holiness, but a type and emblem of ourselves. Let us listen to the words of the Apostle St. Paul: "Know ye not," he says, "that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy: for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are³." And again, "What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God; and ye are not your own? . . . therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's⁴." And again, "Ye are the temple of the living God, as God hath said, I will dwell in them and walk in them: and I will be their God, and they shall be my people⁵."

Thus then the heart of each individual

³ 1 Cor. iii. 16, 17.

⁴ Ibid. vi. 19, 20.

⁵ Ibid. vi. 16.

Christian is a temple. It is built up with stones far more costly and precious than those which adorned the visible fabric at Jerusalem. The Holy Spirit sheds its radiance there; and though the light be unseen, save by the eye of faith, it is no less sacred than was the Shechinah, which marked the presence of God in the first tabernacle; or than the yet greater glory which filled the second temple, when the Desire of all nations was presented at its shrine.

So, also, may every visit of our Saviour to the Jewish temple be regarded as a type and emblem of His entrance into ourselves. Thus we were yet infants when the light of His salvation first shone upon us, and afterwards, at the close of our childhood, He visited us again. But though Baptism and Confirmation are the more marked periods of His presence, He has kept continually coming to us—our hearts, no less than the temple at Jerusalem, may be called the scene of His daily

teaching. Every good resolution and holy thought proceeds from Him. And if in truth He be not always with us, it is because we possess a like fearful power with that exercised by the children of Israel, of driving Him from us, and crucifying Him by our sins. Let us remember, then, that when we suffer our hearts to grow full of worldly affections, worldly business, and worldly cares, then are we making a house of merchandise of the house of prayer; then are there buyers and sellers within us carrying on their careless traffic; and the tables of the money-changers and the seats of those who sell doves are again standing in the very presence of Christ. And is there any one who has not felt, that not once or twice only, but very often, the Master of the house has brought a scourge into this our temple, and so claimed it for his own? Is there any one who cannot speak of seasons, when, in spite of himself, his

heart has been purified by the chastening rod of affliction, and rendered a more meet dwelling-place for the Holy Spirit of God?

There are seasons in which, it may be from bereavement, or from the ingratitude of friends, or from sickness, or from some great loss of property, or it may be merely from some sudden despondency, unaccountable even to ourselves—seasons, I say, in which all our hopes and expectations pass away from us in a moment. There is a shadow on every object, and the prospect around us becomes changed and dreary, as we view things that we once loved under the dark colouring which it sheds upon them: that shadow is caused by a cloud from Heaven, and it is a sign that our Lord has come to us with the scourge in His hand. For these are the times in which the buyers and sellers are driven in mercy from us; and the seats and tables which we have raised

in our hearts are overthrown; and the house of merchandise is once again, though haply but for a little while, restored as the house of prayer.

These thoughts have a closer and more immediate application to the present season than those which we followed yesterday. For though we may undoubtedly recognize the call of God in our impulses of joy, yet for the most part He speaks to us during Lent in the voice of sorrow. Our fasts and prayers, our solemn services, the gospels which daily fix our eyes on the cross of Christ, our meditations on the warnings given in vain to the children of Israel, may, by God's grace, awaken in our minds sad and penitential feelings; they may raise, for a season, a cloud around us, and make us conscious of the vanity of those cares and occupations which hitherto have rendered us unmindful of the presence of Christ. And because we feel

thus desolate and miserable, our hearts may yearn within us to fix their best affections upon Him, in whom alone we can find a sure and lasting rest.

But if, by God's blessing, this should be so, do not let us, on that account, suppose that all is safe; that when the present week is over, we may relax our watchfulness, and that (simply because we now, through His grace, desire it) we shall abide for evermore in our Saviour's love. It is indeed better to go to the house of mourning than to the house of feasting. And the path of sorrow and chastisement is perhaps less exposed to temptation than that brighter path along which we are allowed to walk during our seasons of religious joy. But let us remember, that both paths alike are blessed by our Lord's presence; and that, notwithstanding this, both in turn were trodden by the Jews during His earthly ministry, and were trodden by them in vain;—let us take heed then lest we also walk with our Sa-

viour for a single day, and be ready on the morrow to crucify Him by some new act of sin; let us take heed lest He should not be always with us as He is with us now. We cannot expect that He will go on sending us affliction after affliction, warning after warning, call after call. The hour must come at length when His daily teaching in the temple of our hearts will be drawing to a close, and He will enter then with the scourge of sorrow and repentance for the last time. It may be, that it has already come; that this is the day of our visitation, the last of the heart-stirrings that will be granted to us; the last week of godly sadness; the last call, the last warning that we ever shall receive. If after this the spirit of worldliness or impurity again gain dominion over us, our Lord, perhaps, will enter us no more. We may remain, as did the temple at Jerusalem after His death, in our outward appearance unchanged, but with that Spirit, which can

alone give us life and holiness, withdrawn. Henceforth, the buying and selling, the worldly traffic and unhallowed gain, may go on uninterrupted in the heart that once was the abode of God. It may be said of us, as it is written, "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still, and he that is filthy, let him be filthy still ⁶." Until at length the day of our judgment arrives, and the abomination of desolation will be set up within us, which will separate for all eternity the house of merchandize from the house of prayer.

To conclude: the events of Monday and Tuesday in Passion week combine in warning us to distinguish between momentary feelings, and a settled and deliberate choice. We must not regard any impulses, whether they be impulses of joy or impulses of sorrow, as signs that we are walking in the right path; they are earnest and pledges

⁶ Rev. xxii. 11.

of our Saviour's love, but they cannot be earnest and pledges of our own obedience; —to consider them as such, is in truth to mistake the voice of God within us for our own voluntary answer. We can no more help being affected by His calls than the multitude could help shouting Hosanna in His path, or than the buyers and sellers could help forsaking their traffic at His command. "When He opens his hand we are filled with good; when He hides His face we are troubled," just as "when He takes away our breath we die⁷." All this is His doing, and not ours. And the return He requires from us is not one day or one season, but a life devoted to His service. In the words of the same Psalm, "We must sing unto the Lord as long as we live; we must praise our God while we have our being, and so shall our words please Him, our joy shall be in the

⁷ Psalm civ. 28. 35.

Lord. As for sinners, they shall be consumed out of the earth, and the ungodly shall come to an end. Praise thou the Lord, O my soul, praise the Lord."

Wednesday before Easter.

THE EVENTS OF WEDNESDAY.

“AND in the morning, as they passed by, ^{Mark xi.} they saw the fig tree dried up from the ^{—xiv. 2} roots.

And Peter calling to remembrance saith unto him, Master, behold, the fig tree which thou cursedst is withered away.

And Jesus answering saith unto them, Have faith in God.

For verily I say unto you, that whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass; he shall have whatsoever he saith.

Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them.

And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses.

But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses.

And they come again to Jerusalem: and as he was walking in the temple, there come to him the chief priests, and the scribes, and the elders,

And say unto him, By what authority doest thou these things? and who gave thee this authority to do these things?

And Jesus answered and said unto them, I will also ask of you one question, and answer me, and I will tell you by what authority I do these things.

The baptism of John, was it from heaven, or of men? answer me.

And they reasoned with themselves, saying, If we shall say, From heaven; he will say, Why then did ye not believe him?

But if we shall say, Of men; they feared the people: for all men counted John, that he was a prophet indeed.

And they answered and said unto Jesus, We cannot tell. And Jesus answering saith unto them, Neither do I tell you by what authority I do these things.

And he began to speak unto them by Chap. xii. parables. A certain man planted a vineyard, and set an hedge about it, and digged a place for the wine-fat, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into a far country.

And at the season he sent to the husbandmen a servant, that he might receive from the husbandmen of the fruit of the vineyard.

And they caught him, and beat him, and sent him away empty.

And again he sent unto them another

servant; and at him they cast stones, and wounded him in the head, and sent him away shamefully handled.

And again he sent another; and him they killed, and many others; beating some, and killing some.

Having yet therefore one son, his well-beloved, he sent him also last unto them, saying, They will reverence my son.

But those husbandmen said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and the inheritance shall be ours.

And they took him, and killed him, and cast him out of the vineyard.

What shall therefore the Lord of the vineyard do? he will come and destroy the husbandmen, and will give the vineyard unto others.

And have ye not read this scripture; The stone which the builders rejected is become the head of the corner:

This was the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes?

And they sought to lay hold on him, but feared the people: for they knew that he had spoken the parable against them: and they left him, and went their way.

And they send unto him certain of the Pharisees and of the Herodians, to catch him in his words.

And when they were come, they say unto him, Master, we know that thou art true, and carest for no man: for thou regardest not the person of men, but teachest the way of God in truth: Is it lawful to give tribute to Cæsar, or not?

Shall we give, or shall we not give? But he, knowing their hypocrisy, said unto them, Why tempt ye me? bring me a penny, that I may see it.

And they brought it. And he saith unto them, Whose is this image and superscription? And they said unto him, Cæsar's.

And Jesus answering said unto them, Render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and to God the things that are God's. And they marvelled at him.

Then come unto him the Sadducees, which say there is no resurrection; and they asked him, saying,

Master, Moses wrote unto us, If a man's brother die, and leave his wife behind him, and leave no children, that his brother should take his wife, and raise up seed unto his brother.

Now there were seven brethren: and the first took a wife, and dying left no seed.

And the second took her, and died, neither left he any seed: and the third likewise.

And the seven had her, and left no seed: last of all the woman died also.

In the resurrection therefore, when they shall rise, whose wife shall she be of them? for the seven had her to wife.

And Jesus answering said unto them, Do ye not therefore err, because ye know not the scriptures, neither the power of God?

For when they shall rise from the dead,

they neither marry, nor are given in marriage; but are as the angels which are in heaven.

And as touching the dead, that they rise: have ye not read in the book of Moses, how in the bush God spake unto him, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob?

He is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living: ye therefore do greatly err.

And one of the scribes came, and having heard them reasoning together, and perceiving that he had answered them well, asked him, Which is the first commandment of all?

And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord:

And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment.

And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these.

And the scribe said unto him, Well, Master, thou hast said the truth : for there is one God ; and there is none other but he :

And to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love his neighbour as himself, is more than all whole burnt-offerings and sacrifices.

And when Jesus saw that he answered discreetly, he said unto him, Thou art not far from the kingdom of God. And no man after that durst ask him any question.

And Jesus answered and said, while he taught in the temple, How say the scribes that Christ is the son of David ?

For David himself said by the Holy Ghost, The LORD said to my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool.

David therefore himself calleth him Lord; and whence is he then his son? And the common people heard him gladly.

And he said unto them in his doctrine, Beware of the scribes, which love to go in long clothing, and love salutations in the market-places,

And the chief seats in the synagogues, and the uppermost rooms at feasts;

Which devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayers: these shall receive greater damnation.

And Jesus sat over against the treasury, and beheld how the people cast money into the treasury: and many that were rich cast in much.

And there came a certain poor widow, and she threw in two mites, which make a farthing.

And he called unto him his disciples, and saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, that this poor widow hath cast more in, than all they which have cast into the treasury:

For all they did cast in of their abundance: but she of her want did cast in all that she had, even all her living.

Mark xiii. And as he went out of the temple, one of his disciples saith unto him, Master, see what manner of stones and what buildings are here!

And Jesus answering said unto him, Seest thou these great buildings? there shall not be left one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.

And as he sat upon the mount of Olives over against the temple, Peter and James and John and Andrew asked him privately,

Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign when all these things shall be fulfilled?

And Jesus answering them began to say, Take heed lest any man deceive you:

For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many.

And when ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars, be ye not troubled: for

such things must needs be; but the end shall not be yet.

For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be earthquakes in divers places, and there shall be famines and troubles: these are the beginnings of sorrows.

But take heed to yourselves: for they shall deliver you up to councils; and in the synagogues ye shall be beaten: and ye shall be brought before rulers and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them.

And the Gospel must first be published among all nations.

But when they shall lead you, and deliver you up, take no thought beforehand what ye shall speak, neither do ye premeditate: but whatsoever shall be given you in that hour, that speak ye: for it is not ye that speak, but the Holy Ghost.

Now the brother shall betray the brother to death, and the father the son; and children shall rise up against their parents,

and shall cause them to be put to death.

And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake : but he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.

But when ye shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing where it ought not, (let him that readeth understand,) then let them that be in Judæa flee to the mountains :

And let him that is on the housetop not go down into the house, neither enter therein, to take any thing out of his house :

And let him that is in the field not turn back again for to take up his garment.

But woe to them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days !

And pray ye that your flight be not in the winter.

For in those days shall be affliction, such as was not from the beginning of the creation which God created unto this time, neither shall be.

And except that the Lord had shortened those days, no flesh should be saved: but for the elect's sake, whom he hath chosen, he hath shortened the days.

And then if any man shall say to you, Lo, here is Christ; or, lo, he is there; believe him not:

For false Christs and false prophets shall rise, and shall show signs and wonders, to seduce, if it were possible, even the elect.

But take ye heed: behold, I have foretold you all things.

But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light,

And the stars of heaven shall fall, and the powers that are in heaven shall be shaken.

And then shall they see the Son of man coming in the clouds with great power and glory.

And then shall he send his angels, and shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from the uttermost part of the earth to the uttermost part of heaven.

Now learn a parable of the fig-tree ;
When her branch is yet tender, and putteth
forth leaves, ye know that summer is near :

So ye in like manner, when ye shall see
these things come to pass, know that it is
nigh, even at the doors.

Verily I say unto you, that this genera-
tion shall not pass, till all these things be
done.

Heaven and earth shall pass away : but
my words shall not pass away.

But of that day and that hour knoweth
no man, no, not the angels which are in
heaven, neither the Son, but the Father.

Take ye heed, watch and pray : for ye
know not when the time is.

For the Son of man is as a man taking
a far journey, who left his house, and gave
authority to his servants, and to every man
his work, and commanded the porter to
watch.

Watch ye therefore : for ye know not
when the master of the house cometh, at

even, or at midnight, or at the cock-crowing, or in the morning:

Lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping.

And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch.

After two days was the feast of the ^{Mark xiv.} passover, and of unleavened bread: and the chief priests and the scribes sought how they might take him by craft, and put him to death.

But they said, Not on the feast day, lest there be an uproar of the people."

"And Judas Iscariot, one of the twelve, ^{Ib. 10, 11.} went unto the chief priests, to betray him unto them.

And when they heard it, they were glad, and promised to give him money. And he sought how he might conveniently betray him."

See also Matt. xxi. 23; xxvi. 5, 14—16.

Luke xx. 1—xxii. 6.

John xii. 37—50.

LECTURE IV.

THE WARNING OF THE FIG TREE.

MARK xi. 21.

“ And Peter calling to remembrance saith unto him,
Master, behold, the fig tree which thou cursedst
is withered away.”

THE narrative of the Evangelists becomes more full and copious as we approach the period of our Lord's crucifixion. Thus the events of the Wednesday occupy a part of four consecutive chapters in St. Mark's Gospel. The Supper at Bethany, which occurred on the Sunday, is introduced among them, probably, as I have said, from its connexion with the treacherous purpose of Judas, which he appears

this evening to have finally resolved upon. But with this exception, every thing that is recorded between the 19th verse of the 11th chapter, and the 11th verse of the 14th chapter, happened on the day which we now commemorate. I have already selected the first incident of the morning, as the subject of the present Lecture. Yet I would not altogether pass the remainder by in silence: for the same colouring is resting upon them all; and we may so view them that they will prepare our minds for the more direct warning which the withering of the fig tree is intended to convey.

Let us then remember, while we read this portion of the sacred narrative, that it is the account of the last day of our Lord's public ministry. The morrow appears to have been spent in prayer and communion with His own disciples: to the chief priests, the scribes, the elders, the Pharisees, the Sadducees, and the common people He appeared no more, until that awful hour

in which they were permitted to fill up the measure of their iniquity by putting Him to death. It is the knowledge of this fact that now casts a shadow on the whole history of the day. We see at once the full meaning of the parable of the vineyard, and the prophecy concerning the rejection of the cornerstone: on the Wednesday both of these were but predictions of the future; on the Friday they will have become histories of the past. We regard our Lord's answers to the Pharisee, the Sadducee, and the scribe, as the parting gift which He bestowed upon each of them. It was their last opportunity of profiting by His instructions; and He still lingered on until, one by one, they were put to silence by His words. St. Mark expressly tells us, that it was not until no man durst ask Him any further question, that He at length finally left them.

The last incident related of Him while at the temple in Jerusalem, is His watch-

ing the offerings that were brought into the treasury. How solemn is the thought that those offerings would no longer avail that perishable building when His presence was withdrawn! With the blessing of Christ the two mites of the poor widow might have been enough to preserve the temple and the temple service in all its glory: without it, the most costly gifts of silver and gold could not for a single hour arrest the ruin which threatened them. This thought would seem to have been among the number of those which weighed most heavily on our Lord's spirit when He sat in the temple for the last time; it was one that found vent in words as He went away, for we read that He then said to His disciples, "Seest thou these great buildings? there shall not be left one stone upon another that shall not be cast down." And yet, if we view it rightly, how full of comfort is the reflection, that this knowledge of the future did not prevent our Lord's watching

the gifts which were thus unprofitably made, and separating from the rest the widow's offering ! No stronger proof could have been afforded us, that in the midst of the greatest national guilt, each individual is still an object of peculiar regard ; and that even after the judgment has been finally decreed, no one prayer, no one act of obedience, no single mite which is in truth the offering of faith and love, can escape the notice of our Saviour.

After our Lord had quitted Jerusalem He again went to the Mount of Olives ; and there in private, to four of His chosen Apostles, He foretold the destinies of the Christian Church, even to the end of time. He spoke of wars and rumours of wars, of trials and persecutions, of false Christs and false prophets, and of those awful signs, that the world has not yet witnessed, which were to be the forerunners of the day of judgment. But it is the closing words of this long prediction which remind us most distinctly of the morrow ; for He

likened Himself to a man taking a far journey, who left his house, and gave authority to his servants, and to every man his work. So clear is the description, that the words scarce seem to us like a parable at all: the "servants" are the Apostles, "the house" is the Church upon earth, the "far journey" is to Heaven, and in two days from this period, the "Son of Man" would be passing through the valley of the shadow of death on His way thither.

Such is the view that may be taken of the events of Wednesday in Passion week. They remind us how, at this time, the Jewish Church was forfeiting for ever the privilege of a Saviour's presence. The words "Me ye have not always with you," which are interwoven in the narrative of this day by St. Mark, may be said to throw back their light on every incident; while we have a more awful commentary upon them in the conspiracy of the chief priests and elders, and the treacherous covenant of Judas, with which the history

of the day is at length brought to a close. Let us, however, not forget that the signs which now seem to us so clear and significant, conveyed no warning to those who were living among them. We are told that while our Lord was teaching in the temple "the common people heard Him gladly¹." Such, surely, would not have been their feeling, had they but known that they listened, on this occasion, to His parting words. But there was nothing in their eyes to distinguish the present visit to the temple from many which had preceded it. For three years they had gone on being hearers of the Word, and now that the crisis had come they were *glad* hearers of it, and no more: for three years they had gone on resisting the stirrings of the Holy Spirit in their heart, and they resisted them still—their part was as yet untaken, their choice unmade. Perhaps in secret they were postponing it to the morrow; they did not know that

¹ Mark xii. 37.

on the morrow the hour of darkness would come, and the stirrings of the Spirit cease; and that Satan would make their choice for them, and force them to cry aloud for the crucifixion of Him to Whom, for the last time, they were this day listening with unprofitable joy.

We will now leave the general narrative of events, and go back to the withered fig tree, which they rendered so true an emblem of the Jewish Church.

On the Tuesday when our Lord hungered on His way from Bethany to Jerusalem, the branch of the common fig tree must have been still tender, and it could only have been just putting forth its leaves as it felt the first approach of summer. There were many such trees in the neighbourhood; buds and blossoms they may have borne: but it would have been unreasonable to look to them for fruit, for, as St. Mark tells us, "the time of figs was not yet." One tree, however, there was which stood out in its beauty distinct from all the

rest. It belonged to a peculiar species, capable of bearing on its branches the produce of two seasons, and uniting the blossom of the present year to the fruit of the past. Such was the favoured fig tree which, while He was afar off, attracted the notice of our Lord. The abundance of its foliage separated it, as it were, from the trees around; and He approached it in the apparent expectation of finding fruit upon its boughs. But neither fruit nor blossom was there. In spite of its outward show, it was, in truth, a barren unprofitable tree. There were leaves upon it, and nothing more. Our Lord, therefore, cursed the fig tree and departed from it. This morning, when the Apostles passed by, they found it in the same place as before; no one had cut it down or taken it away; but every leaf had withered beneath the curse of yesterday, the very roots were dried up, while the barren trunk was left as a sign of its former unfruitfulness, and present punishment.

Surely we scarcely need the remembrance of the parable² of the fig tree planted in the vineyard to point out to us the spiritual application of this miracle of our Lord. The favoured tree is the Jewish Church. Our Saviour saw it afar off, when He looked down upon it from heaven; not once only, but for three successive years He had already come to it, "seeking fruit and finding none." The common trees were the Gentile nations around. Their branch was even then tender, and the season drawing near, when leaves and fruit might be found upon them. For the long and desolate winter caused by the fall of man was passing away, and in a little while the summer sun would be shining so brightly, that fertility and plenteousness would again cover the ground. Still that season had not yet arrived—the time of figs was not yet. One tree alone appeared which at present was covered with leaves: the Jewish Church stood by itself, dis-

² Luke xiii. 6.

inct from the Gentile nations, and was capable of blending the new blossom with the former fruit, the blessedness of the Gospel with the blessedness of the Law. Bright and countless in their multitude were the leaves that covered this favoured tree; the commandments on the tables of stone, the rites of sacrifice, the ordinances of the law, the volume of the prophets, an uninterrupted priesthood, the daily service, the former and the latter House of God, the example of the holy patriarchs, the remembrance of past mercies, past judgments, and past warnings, and the glorious hope of future privileges and of future blessings;—These, and such as these, were the leaves of that favoured tree, when on the morning of yesterday, our Lord sought fruit upon it and found none; but they were leaves and only leaves—neither fruit nor blossom was there. During the former season, the fig tree had been barren; and therefore it would continue barren during the approaching season also. The children of Israel did not believe on Moses and the prophets,

and therefore they did not believe on Him of Whom they wrote. Our Lord therefore cursed that fig tree; and to-day, while we look upon it, though it is still standing in its former place, its leaves are withered and its roots are dry.

And remember, that it may be truly and emphatically said, while we look upon it *to-day*—the trees of the Gentiles have been long since clad with verdure, but the fig tree of Jerusalem has remained as our Saviour left it, for a warning to them all. The hand of man has been found all too powerless to cut it down. There it has stood through all the changes of time, as though but yesterday it had been visited by the curse of God. Eighteen centuries have passed by; not one hope, not one privilege has been restored; not one green leaf, not one sign of life or fruitfulness has appeared, and yet, as though in very mockery, it continues to spread far and wide, through every land, its dry and naked boughs. Still do the children of Israel, who, if only it had been found fruitful in its season,

might have dwelt in peace and safety beneath its branches, appeal to them in vain for a shadow from the heat, or a shelter from the storm. So unchanged is the outward appearance of the tree, that they do not yet believe that it is dead, and that its very root is dried up and gone. But year after year they still expect it to revive; as though its green leaves had but been swept away by a passing wind, and would be restored to it again.

Let us now proceed to apply to ourselves the warning which the emblem of the fig tree is intended to convey. It reminds us that great privileges will be either blessings or burthens, according to the effect which they have on our hearts and lives. The application is similar to that which was suggested by the events of the two former days, but not the same. Monday and Tuesday spoke to us of mere transitory emotions, whether emotions of joy, or emotions of sorrow: but Wednesday speaks to us of something more eternal, tangible, and lasting; not of feel-

ings which come and go, but of the privileges which we daily and hourly enjoy. These privileges are no cause for self-satisfaction and pride; they are the gift of God; and in proportion as they are the more abundant, they are the more likely to attract the eye of our Saviour when He is afar off, and to cause Him to come quickly to us, and to ask us for our fruit. This is a truth, on which it is of special importance for us as a congregation to dwell. If there be aught of blessedness in frequent opportunities of almsgiving, or in a daily service, or in a weekly communion; if there be aught of blessedness in the children who have been entrusted to us to educate, or in the poor who have been given to us to relieve, or in the means now open to us of contributing to the extension of the Kingdom of Christ; if there be aught of blessedness in the Church in which we worship, or in the numbers who pray for us and with us, or even in these very reflections, to which at this season it has pleased God to draw our hearts,—re-

member that all these things are leaves, only leaves. Our Lord is even now looking down upon them from Heaven, and this day and every day we must think of Him as coming to us and asking us for our fruit. And should He find our faith and repentance to be growing in unison with our prayers and communions, should He find that we indeed educate the children of the flock in their Saviour's love, that we relieve His poor, that we assist in spreading the glad tidings of the Gospel in foreign lands, that we endeavour to realize His presence in the holy building in which we so constantly meet, and that our lives are in accordance with the stirrings of His Spirit within us,—should He find this to be the case, His blessing will most assuredly rest on the privileges that He has given us; and He will not suffer one branch of the fig tree that we love, to be broken, or one leaf that is now green to wither away.

But should it be otherwise, should our own hearts tell us that we individually, at

least, are resting satisfied with the abundance of our leaves, and that our lives and tempers are uninfluenced by the privileges which we enjoy; if we make our religion consist in going to church, and receiving the holy Communion, and hearing sermons, and in these outward observances alone; let us remember that we are provoking God to withdraw them from us, and to inflict His curse upon the unprofitable tree. It may be, as in the parable, that for three years He has already come to it, seeking fruit, and finding none, and that He will suffer it to remain but one year more. It may be that He is digging about it for the last time by the thoughts that He is suggesting to us now. Let this reflection be with us as we meditate on the concluding day of the public ministry of our Lord; and while we thank Him for all His goodness in affording us so great an abundance of leaves, let us pray earnestly that whenever He comes to ask for it, He may find that we have fruit.

Thursday before Easter.

THE EVENTS OF THURSDAY.

“And the first day of unleavened bread, when they killed the passover, his disciples said unto him, Where wilt thou that we go and prepare that thou mayest eat the Passover? Mark xiv. 12—26.

And he sendeth forth two of his disciples, and saith unto them, Go ye into the city, and there shall meet you a man bearing a pitcher of water: follow him.

And wheresoever he shall go in, say ye to the goodman of the house, The Master saith, Where is the guestchamber, where I shall eat the passover with my disciples?

And he will show you a large upper room furnished and prepared : there make ready for us.

And his disciples went forth, and came into the city, and found as he had said unto them : and they made ready the Passover.

And in the evening he cometh with the twelve.

And as they sat and did eat, Jesus said, Verily I say unto you, One of you which eateth with me shall betray me.

And they began to be sorrowful, and to say unto him one by one, Is it I? and another said, Is it I?

And he answered and said unto them, It is one of the twelve, that dippeth with me in the dish.

The Son of man indeed goeth, as it is written of him : but woe to that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed ! good were it for that man if he had never been born.

And as they did eat, Jesus took bread,

and blessed, and brake it, and gave to them, and said, Take, eat : this is my body.

And he took the cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them : and they all drank of it.

And he said unto them, This is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many.

Verily I say unto you, I will drink no more of the fruit of the vine, until that day that I drink it new in the kingdom of God.

And when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives."

See also Matt. xxvi. 17—30.

Luke xxii. 7—39.

John xiii. 1—xviii. 1.

LECTURE V.

THE WARNING OF JUDAS.

MARK xiv. 18—20.

“ Jesus said, Verily, I say unto you, one of you which eateth with me shall betray me. And they began to be sorrowful, and to say unto Him one by one, Is it I? and another said, Is it I? And He answered and said unto them, It is one of the twelve that dippeth with me in the dish.”

As on Wednesday we were led to consider the last acts of our Lord's public ministry, so does Thursday direct our thoughts to the closing scene of His intercourse with His own disciples: it brings as it were before us His private life and

the familiar friends with whom he dwelt ; and there is a quietness in the Gospel narrative which harmonizes with this view. In the morning we read that He sent forth two of His disciples, and said unto them, "Go ye into the city, and there shall meet you a man bearing a pitcher of water : follow him. And wheresoever He shall go in, say to the good man of the house, The master saith, Where is the guest chamber, where I shall eat the passover with my disciples? And he will show you a large upper room furnished and prepared ; there make ready for us." No stir or tumult attended them, they bore with them no external sign of their divine mission ; nothing to excite the curiosity of the passer by : we merely read that "they went forth and came into the city, and found as He had said unto them : and they made ready the passover." And yet neither the acclamations of the people, nor the purifying of the temple, nor the withering of the fig tree gave surer evi-

dence of our Lord's miraculous power than the simple incidents, which in accordance with His prediction, marked their journey.

Our Lord Himself did not accompany them, He no longer taught in the temple as had been His wont, but remained on the Mount of Olives, and probably spent the morning in prayer. And so the day passed away in silence, and it was not till the shades of evening had closed in that He came to Jerusalem with the twelve: then as He sat and did eat with them He gave them the warning contained in the text, and immediately afterwards instituted the Holy Communion. They then sung a hymn together and went out into the Mount of Olives, and this may be said to bring to a close St Mark's narrative of the day; for the events recorded in the remaining part of the 14th chapter, did not occur until the troubled night that was to usher in the morning of the crucifixion, had already arrived.

Such is the general view of the incidents of the Thursday: they are of a more still and solemn character, than those of the days that preceded it. Instead of the thoughtless multitude, the traffickers in the temple, the chief priests and scribes, we find ourselves alone with St. Peter, and St. James, and St. John, and those who had left all to follow Christ. And yet even these might add to the warnings of the Holy Week, for had we carried on our narrative to the succeeding night, we should have read how St. Peter denied Him, and all the rest forsook Him and fled. It is not, however, of these that I would now speak; their warnings are like passing shadows, and the Easter sun is now shining on the place where they fell. But there is one who has left a more deep and lasting mark upon the day. It was on the Thursday that Judas Iscariot emerged from his obscurity, and assumed openly the part which he had chosen. Let us then dwell upon his

apostleship; and the same lesson that we read yesterday will again meet us, though written yet more distinctly, because it is in the history of an individual that we trace it now. We shall gather from it that it is possible for the pathway which lies through the midst of the highest privileges to be so trodden that it will only bring us to perdition at last.

Our thoughts of the ministry of Judas Iscariot are for the most part darkened by our foreknowledge of its close. When his name first meets us in the list of the Apostles, we find annexed to it the words, "which also betrayed Him." And this fearful record at once arrests our imagination; and we lose sight of the privileges of Judas in our anticipation of his fall. But let us remember, that for three long years there was no outward mark to distinguish Judas from the other Apostles of our Lord. He had received the same call, and, like them, had left all to follow Him. He was in the daily habit of not

only witnessing His public ministry and miracles, but of listening to His more private instructions also. He himself had been endued with miraculous power, and could heal the sick, and cast out devils, and perform many wondrous works, in the Name of Jesus. Up to the very night on which we are now entering, he seemed to be walking so closely by the side of his fellow-disciples, that no suspicion had crossed their minds of the gulf which separated him from them. For when Jesus said, "Verily I say unto you, one of you which eateth with Me shall betray Me;" they "began to be sorrowful, and to say unto Him, one by one, Is it I? And another said, Is it I?" And again, when He said yet more directly to Judas himself, "What thou doest, do quickly," no man at the table knew for what intent He spake thus unto him.

Now this ignorance becomes the more striking, if we recollect the opportunity which one at least of their number must

have had of ascertaining his real motives and character. When our Lord sent them out two by two, the traitor Judas and some faithful Apostle, though we know not whom, must undoubtedly have journeyed alone together : their wants and necessities, their occupations and interests, their trials and dangers, must have been the same ; they were, in truth, as two men labouring in the same field, grinding in the same mill, and sleeping in the same bed, of whom, when the day of their visitation came, the one was to be taken, the other left.

Are we then to suppose that during this period there was no real distinction between Judas and the rest ? Very far otherwise. There was no visible distinction, but doubtless there was a real one. The repeated warnings of our Saviour point from the first to some one Apostle as following a forbidden path.—“Have I not chosen you twelve,” He said, “and one of you is a devil ?” It was his

outward journey alone that lay through the midst of sacrifices, privileges, and blessings; he passed through them all as one in a dream, while day by day he drew nearer and nearer to the edge of that precipice from which he finally fell. And our Lord, who could read the heart, knew all the time that so it was; "for Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who should betray Him ¹."

Still the question arises, why, if such were indeed his state of feeling, Judas should have continued so long to profess the service of Christ? Why did he not rather forsake Him at once, and go back again to the world. We must not suppose that he was from the very first watching an opportunity to betray Him. The openness of our Lord's teaching would of itself have precluded the thought; for up to the very close of His ministry, it did

¹ John vi. 70.

not seem necessary that a follower of His own should be the guide to those who took Him. Besides, even if it had been otherwise, the hope of thirty pieces of silver must have proved to the most covetous mind a very insufficient motive for three years of the most heart-sickening service; and such undoubtedly to a false Apostle was the attendance upon Christ—watching with fear and trembling every miracle that he saw—warned of his own condemnation by each parable that he heard—waiting without hope, following without love, preaching without faith—casting out evil spirits from others, while he himself was in secret harbouring a more evil spirit than any which he drove away—devoid of all sympathy for those with whom he lived—having forsaken all, and gained nothing in return—outwardly dead to the world, and inwardly dead to the Church—wandering in the body hither and thither with one who had not where to lay His head, and yet feeling that his

own soul within him was more homeless, more friendless, more miserably alone.

How then are we to account for Judas having voluntarily subjected himself for so long a period to this life of wretchedness? why did he not at once break through the bonds that united him to Christ? He probably shared the same inconsistency of purpose with the rest of those who rejected the teaching of our Lord. For though he differed from them, in that outwardly his part had been taken; there was a more important point in which he resembled them—the choice of his heart was yet unmade. And just as was the effect of our Lord's public teaching on the wavering multitude, who on one day welcomed Him as their King, and on another were clamorous for His death; so also in a yet higher degree may it have been with regard to that nearer and more awful intercourse with Him which the false Apostle enjoyed. Day after day two paths lay before him; the one the open path, along

which he walked by his Saviour's side; the other, the hidden path of sin. Day after day he strove to follow them both, until he became less and less conscious of the gulf which really separated them. He wished to reconcile the service of Satan with the service of Christ; for while in his inmost heart he loved the one, he was still afraid to relinquish his hold upon the other.

Neither was this all;—he must have felt that it was impossible for him to set himself free. As the Jews could not become as the heathen to serve wood and stone, so neither could an ordained Apostle return again to the common lot of mankind. He was forced either to go onward in a higher walk, or to leave it by some fearful fall. His mysterious call to the apostolic office, the repeated warnings that had been vouchsafed to him, the very prayer that he had learned, the Gospel that his own lips had preached, the miraculous power with which he was endued, the holy fellowship to which

he belonged, all these were things which could not pass away from his remembrance; and he knew that they must either remain with him as a privilege and a blessing, or cling to him as a burthen and a curse. And thus it was that he went on to the last, hiding himself in what he seemed to be, as a refuge from what he was; finding comfort perhaps in the very secrecy of his sin, from the hope that the hearts of his brethren might be in the same fearful condition as his own; watching eagerly, from this cause, each sign of weakness which they betrayed,—the doubtfulness and despondency of St. Thomas,—the self-confidence of St. Peter,—and the zealous indignation of St. James and St. John:—at times also, mistaking in himself remorse for repentance, and emotions for resolutions, and the stirrings of the Spirit for renewal of life, and a mere barren service for the living obedience of faith; until at length his ears became deaf and his eyes dim, and his heart hardened, and

the grace of God was taken away from him; and then the veil, which had concealed him from the eyes of men, was withdrawn, and in a moment he was suffered to fall down that precipice, along the very edge of which he for three years had been secretly walking.

Such is the view that may be taken of the ministry of Judas. Let us sum it up in few words, that we may see more plainly the warning that it conveys to ourselves. We have no account of his call to the apostleship, but we find him in possession of all its external privileges, having, at a former period, made the sacrifices which were necessary to obtain them. He was one of the few who professed the service of Christ, not now and then, as they were led by transient feelings, but openly and deliberately during the greater part of His earthly ministry. But we know that in spite of this profession and these privileges, he was all along unclean in the sight of God, and that though no trace has been

left of the origin or progress of this uncleanness, we may be sure that its growth was gradual, and that the fall, which seemed to men so sudden and unaccountable a change, was but the outward manifestation of a long-cherished sin. He was, in truth, as a fig tree planted in a vineyard, whose barrenness had for three years been concealed from the eyes of men by the abundance of its leaves. Again and again the Lord of the vineyard had come to it, seeking fruit and finding none. And now the yet more careful culture of the fourth year had been bestowed upon it in vain; for it remained unfruitful still, and therefore it was cut down at length, and no longer suffered to cumber the ground.

Thus, as I have said, the fall of an apostle on the Thursday renews to us the warnings of the earlier days of the week, and yet, at the same time, it goes beyond them. For it does not speak merely of feelings and privileges, but it further tells us that neither past acts of self-devotion, nor extended

powers of usefulness, nor the apparent surrender of our time and parts to the immediate service of Christ, are in themselves any sure test of a really religious life. They can but raise us, if we may so speak, to the fellowship of the Apostles, but in that fellowship the traitor Judas was found. Let us for a moment compare our own possible case with his. We may have made some sacrifices for religion, but Judas had left all to follow Christ; we may have been instrumental in the conversion of others, but Judas had exercised miraculous power; we may be open and consistent partizans of the Church, in her warfare with the world, but Judas was one of the very few who, when numbers took offence at the doctrine of our Lord, refused to leave Him, and confessed that he had the words of eternal life.

From this then we gather, as a general lesson, the necessity of constant self-examination, watchfulness, and prayer. Let our outward path be where it will, there is

an inward path also, along which our real journey lies. The friends who observe us most closely may be deceived as to the direction in which it is leading us. For it is a path in which they cannot follow us. We walk in it alone either with Satan or with God.

But while the general lesson that Judas affords us is one that each must apply to himself, his journey was not so secret but that here and there a mark appears upon the surface which we may point out to others also. His final act of apostasy has now shed its light upon his previous history; and when we look back upon it from this point, the plague-spot of sin will more than once appear. It would seem as though each circumstance recorded of him in the Gospel were expressly written for our warning. There are three practical cautions to be derived from them, with a brief allusion to which I will conclude.

1. We know that covetousness was the besetting sin of Judas, and yet, as we

read, he kept the bag; that is, he took charge of the common property of his Master and fellow-disciples. Of course this was an office which some one of their number must have held. It was harmless in itself, and one which the disposition of Judas would naturally lead him to seek. But for this very cause it was not harmless to him. He may not in the first instance have accepted it with any evil purpose, but at best, by that one act, he exposed himself to a daily recurring temptation. If he examined his own heart, he must have known that his peculiar danger did not so much lie in pride, or lust, or slothfulness, or discontent, as in the love of money. He ought therefore to have confessed his own unworthiness, and shrunk from its very sight and touch. But instead of this he indulged his secret wish, and suffered himself to look upon it and to handle it day by day,—and day by day Satan kept forming it into chains which slowly and silently drew him along,

until at length his whole purpose changed ; and instead of taking charge of it as the property of others, he imperceptibly became a thief, and regarded it as his own. This then is one caution which we gather from the history of Judas, and it is a very clear and practical one. We must not place ourselves in situations which, though in themselves innocent, will in a peculiar manner expose us to the assaults of our besetting sin. I do not mean that in every instance we can avoid them, but we shall be wrong if we voluntarily make choice of them on account of some secret pleasure which they afford us. Thus if our weakness be vanity, we should shrink from opportunities of display ; if covetousness, of gain ; if ambition, a state dependent on the will of the great ; and so on with the rest. The deliberate choice of a single hour will often bring with it the silent temptations of years ; and perhaps when we have fallen most fearfully, we shall be able to find no trace of our

gradual journey, but the first false step that placed us in the path of danger.

2. It is towards the close of the ministry of Judas, that another warning is given us. At the supper at Bethany, the secret flame broke forth, although it was still so disguised that our Lord alone could tell the source from which it came. When Mary lavished her costly gift upon our Saviour, it was Judas who first asked, "Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor²?" Here again there was nothing in the question itself deserving of blame. It had in it a show of reason, nay, more, of charity. The other disciples were carried away by its speciousness, and appear to have repeated the same expostulation, though with very different feelings. But the words, as they proceeded from the lips of Judas, were sinful words; and it was from the evil treasure of his heart that he gave them utterance. He used

² John xii. 5.

them as a cloak for his covetousness. He raised the objection, as St. John expressly tells us, "not that he cared for the poor; but because he was a thief, and kept the bag, and bare what was put therein³." This then is another point at which we now see, as it were, the mark of the footstep of the false Apostle. And the warning that it has left is the more fearful, because it is found so very near the close of his journey. It is separated from his covenant with the chief priests by only three days in point of time; and St. Mark, as we have seen, includes it amongst the events of Wednesday, as though it had some immediate connexion with his final fall. We learn from it the danger of suffering our evil thoughts to go forth in the disguise of specious words, and check the devotions of others. I will give instances of my meaning. It is no uncommon thing to hear persons grudging the sums collected for missionary labour,

³ John xii. 6.

while we have so very much of want and misery at home; or complaining of the magnificence of some of our churches, when so many districts are unprovided with church accommodation at all; or again, speaking disparagingly of an act of sacrifice on the part of an individual, because by it his daily opportunities of usefulness may have been diminished or withdrawn. Now, when we do this, it will be well to remember that we are bordering very close on the language of Judas, "To what purpose is this waste? might not this ointment have been sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor?" God forbid that I should say we are necessarily bordering on his feelings also. The words may doubtless be used with sincerity; and because we really do care for the poor. But we ought never to employ them without carefully examining the source from which they flow; nay, more, without testing them by our actions also, and asking ourselves

whether we are really devoting our talents, time, and money to the support of those objects which we bring forward in our words. If it be otherwise, and they are words of coldness and not of zeal, it would be far better for us to pray that the thought of our heart might be forgiven us, than to suffer Satan thus to clothe it in language, and send it forth into the world.

3. Such are the warnings that the office and the words of Judas afford us. Both were in themselves innocent, but in his case the one was a continual temptation, the other a deliberate act of sin. There is, however, a third and yet more fearful warning to be gathered from his history, on which our Prayer-Book dwells. It can hardly be said to have preceded his last act of apostasy, so much as to have accompanied it. I mean his participation of the last Supper of our Lord. Before he sat down to that holy feast, he had made his covenant with the chief priests, and was

seeking an opportunity to betray Him; but it was while he was there, that Satan entered into his heart; and it was when he went away from thence that the wished-for opportunity occurred. Thus the receiving the sop from our Saviour's hand would seem, in some mysterious way, to have filled up the measure of his guilt, and the grace of God, which, in spite of himself, had been so long sustaining his tottering steps, was then finally withdrawn. Doubtless the time had been, when his better feelings would have been awakened by such an act; but he had been so long accustomed to come with impure thoughts into his Divine Master's presence, that he had gradually ceased to regard Him with reverence and awe. He probably had followed Him to Jerusalem, and gone with Him to the upper chamber, and suffered Him to wash his feet, and partaken of the bread which He had blessed and afterwards of the sop which He offered him, merely because he did not wish, by any external sign of diffe-

rence, to betray his secret purpose. He would seem to have done it all as a mere matter of course, without, on the one hand, any wilful profaneness, or, on the other, a single feeling of remorse or alarm. It is important that we should bear this in mind, lest we mistake the nature of the warning that He gives us. The whole ministry of Judas does, indeed, warn us all to be very careful how we come with unprepared hearts to holy places and holy ordinances, till, from long habit, all feeling of their holiness is withdrawn. But the last act speaks especially to those who partake of the Lord's Supper, merely that the world may fancy it is well with them, while they are indulging in secret some unrepented sin. It is such persons as these, that our Church, in her Communion Service, reminds of the warning of Judas Iscariot: neither will I now venture to apply it otherwise, than in her own most solemn words: "If any of you," she says, "be a blasphemer of God, an hinderer or slan-

derer of His word, an adulterer, or be in malice, or envy, or in any other grievous crime, repent you of your sins, or else come not to that holy table, lest, after the taking of that Holy Sacrament, the devil enter into you, as he did into Judas, and fill you full of all iniquities, and bring you to destruction, both of body and soul.”

Good Friday.

THE TRIAL OF OUR LORD BEFORE PILATE.

“AND straightway in the morning the Mark xv. 1. chief priests held a consultation with the elders and scribes and the whole council, and bound Jesus, and carried him away, and delivered him to Pilate.”

“And they themselves went not into John xviii 28—xix. 14. the judgment hall, lest they should be defiled; but that they might eat the pass-over.

Pilate then went out unto them, and said, What accusation bring ye against this man?

They answered and said unto him, If he

were not a malefactor, we would not have delivered him up unto thee.

Then said Pilate unto them, Take ye him, and judge him according to your law. The Jews therefore said unto him, It is not lawful for us to put any man to death :

That the saying of Jesus might be fulfilled, which he spake, signifying what death he should die.

Then Pilate entered into the judgment hall again, and called Jesus, and said unto him, Art thou the King of the Jews?

Jesus answered him, Sayest thou this thing of thyself, or did others tell it thee of me?

Pilate answered, Am I a Jew? Thine own nation, and the chief priests have delivered thee unto me: what hast thou done?

Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence.

Pilate therefore said unto him, Art thou a king then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth.

Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice.

Pilate saith unto him, What is truth? And when he had said this, he went out again unto the Jews, and said unto them, I find in him no fault at all.

But ye have a custom, that I should release unto you one at the passover: will ye therefore that I release unto you the King of the Jews?

Then cried they all again, saying, Not this man, but Barabbas. Now Barabbas was a robber.

Then Pilate therefore took Jesus, and John xix. scourged him.

And the soldiers platted a crown of thorns, and put it on his head, and they put on him a purple robe,

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And said, Hail, King of the Jews! and they smote him with their hands.

Pilate therefore went forth again, and saith unto them, Behold, I bring him forth to you, that ye may know that I find no fault in him.

Then came Jesus forth, wearing the crown of thorns, and the purple robe. And Pilate saith unto them, Behold the man!

When the chief priests therefore and officers saw him, they cried out, saying, Crucify him, crucify him. Pilate saith unto them, Take ye him, and crucify him: for I find no fault in him.

The Jews answered him, We have a law, and by our law he ought to die, because he made himself the Son of God.

When Pilate therefore heard that saying, he was the more afraid;

And went again into the judgment hall, and saith unto Jesus, Whence art thou? But Jesus gave him no answer.

Then saith Pilate unto him, Speakest thou not unto me? knowest thou not that I have power to crucify thee, and have power to release thee?

Jesus answered, Thou couldest have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above: therefore he that delivered me unto thee hath the greater sin.

And from thenceforth Pilate sought to release him: but the Jews cried out, saying, If thou let this man go, thou art not Cæsar's friend: whosoever maketh himself a king speaketh against Cæsar.

When Pilate therefore heard that saying, he brought Jesus forth, and sat down in the judgment seat in a place that is called the Pavement, but in the Hebrew, Gabbatha.

And it was the preparation of the pass-over, and about the sixth hour."

"When he was set down on the judgment-^{Matt.xxvii} seat, his wife sent unto him, saying, Have^{19.} thou nothing to do with that just man: for

I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of him."

[ark xv. 2
-5. "And Pilate asked him, Art thou the King of the Jews? And he answering said unto him, Thou sayest it.

And the chief priests accused him of many things: but he answered nothing.

And Pilate asked him again, saying, Answerest thou nothing? behold how many things they witness against thee.

But Jesus yet answered nothing; so that Pilate marvelled."

uke xxiii.
-16. "Then said Pilate to the chief priests and to the people, I find no fault in this man.

And they were the more fierce, saying, He stirreth up the people, teaching throughout all Jewry, beginning from Galilee to this place.

When Pilate heard of Galilee, he asked whether the man were a Galilæan.

And as soon as he knew that he belonged unto Herod's jurisdiction, he sent him to Herod, who himself also was at Jerusalem at that time.

And when Herod saw Jesus, he was exceeding glad: for he was desirous to see him of a long season, because he had heard many things of him; and he hoped to have seen some miracle done by him.

Then he questioned with him in many words; but he answered him nothing.

And the chief priests and scribes stood and vehemently accused him.

And Herod with his men of war set him at nought, and mocked him, and arrayed him in a gorgeous robe, and sent him again to Pilate.

And the same day Pilate and Herod were made friends together: for before they were at enmity between themselves.

And Pilate, when he had called together the chief priests and the rulers and the people,

Said unto them, Ye have brought this man unto me, as one that perverteth the people: and, behold, I, having examined him before you, have found no fault in this man touching those things whereof ye accuse him:

No, nor yet Herod: for I sent you to him; and, lo, nothing worthy of death is done unto him.

I will therefore chastise him, and release him."

Mark xv. 6
—14.

"Now at that feast he released unto them one prisoner, whomsoever they desired.

And there was one named Barabbas, which lay bound with them that had made insurrection with him, who had committed murder in the insurrection.

And the multitude crying aloud began to desire him to do as he had ever done unto them.

But Pilate answered them, saying, Will ye that I release unto you the King of the Jews?

For he knew that the chief priests had delivered him for envy.

But the chief priests moved the people, that he should rather release Barabbas unto them.

And Pilate answered and said again unto them, What will ye then that I shall do

unto him whom ye call the King of the Jews?

And they cried out again, Crucify him.

Then Pilate said unto them, Why, what evil hath he done? And they cried out the more exceedingly, Crucify him."

"When Pilate saw that he could prevail ^{Matt.xxvii} nothing, but that rather a tumult was _{24.} made, he took water, and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just person: see ye to it."

"And so Pilate, willing to content the ^{Mark xv.} people, released Barabbas unto them, and _{15.} delivered Jesus, when he had scourged him, to be crucified."

See also Matt. xxvii. 1—26.

Luke xxiii. 1—25.

John xviii. 28—xix. 16.

LECTURE VI.

THE WARNING OF PILATE.

MARK XV. 15.

“And so Pilate, willing to content the people, released Barabbas unto them, and delivered Jesus, when he had scourged him, to be crucified.”

THE image of Good Friday is impressed upon the whole of Passion week. There is no need to recapitulate the events that happened upon it. Day by day they have been read in our Church Service, and they are, or ought to be, familiar to us all. Even if it were otherwise, they are of too awful a character to be dwelt upon in a few words; and the train of thought

connected with them is deeper, and more full of mystery than that which we have hitherto been following. For the subject of the present Lectures has been, not the cross of Christ itself, but the group by whose hands it was raised ; not the one unchanging source of comfort which this week opens to the penitent, but the daily warning which it affords to the sinner.

For this reason I shall not now dwell on the narrative of the Crucifixion, but confine myself to the circumstance that, on the external view which I have been taking, gives a peculiar feature to the events of the Friday. Hitherto the contest between good and evil, whether secret or open, had been going on within the borders of the Jewish Church ; but on the morning of this day it broke forth and was brought into contact with the world. As yet we have spoken of Jews alone, whether in the wavering multitude, the traffickers in the temple, the emblem of the fig tree, or the false

Apostle ; but this morning the scene was suddenly changed. A heathen ruler found himself obliged to take part in it, and a part of so fearful a prominence that his name became, from that hour, inseparably connected with the sufferings of our Lord. While Judas Iscariot, and Anna, and Caiaphas have been passed over in silence ; one who was an alien from the house of Israel, and a stranger from the covenants of promise, has been selected from among all those who this day "took counsel together against the Lord and against His anointed"¹ to be handed down to a lasting infamy in the Creed of the Christian. It is to his trials and struggles, affording in many respects a marked contrast to those of Judas, and to the warnings to be gathered from them, that I now propose, by God's grace, to direct your attention.

Pontius Pilate then was the Roman governor of Judæa, during the period of our Lord's ministry. We cannot doubt

¹ Psalm ii. 1.

that, as such, he must have heard very frequently of His miracles and doctrine. For the minds of all his subjects were agitated by the question, whether Jesus were the expected Messiah or not; and even had it been otherwise, it is quite inconceivable that the blind should receive their sight, the lame walk, the deaf hear, and the dead be raised to life, in a small district like Judæa, without some rumour having reached the ears of the governor. We shall do well to remember this, as it throws light on that page of his history which this day brings before us. Pilate had, doubtless, heard long before of the signs and wonders wrought by our Lord, and they could not have failed to cause him some kind of disquietude and alarm; for he was, as we shall see, a man of an anxious, and, if we may so speak, a superstitious mind. But he probably, for that very reason, endeavoured to shut his eyes to them, and dismiss them from his thoughts. He seems to have considered it most pru-

dent not to interfere, but to suffer events to take their course, and leave the Jews to settle their religious differences among themselves.

Thus for three years God permitted him to stand aloof, and to have only the responsibilities of a heathen, though the blessings and burthens of the Gospel were scattered on either side of the pathway that he trod. But at the end of that time his hour of trial came: our blessed Lord was brought as a criminal before him, and he could no longer go on halting between two opinions. In spite of his own unwillingness he saw Him and heard Him, and was convinced of His innocence and half persuaded of His Divinity, at the same time that he was compelled to act as His judge. And then at length he was forced to make an open and deliberate choice between his conscience and his interest, between Christ and the world.

No Christian can be ignorant of the result of that choice, for the words in our Creed, "suffered under Pontius Pilate,"

are its lasting record. Yet few, perhaps, have considered the long and painful struggle which preceded it: for, though measured by a few hours in point of time, his was, in truth, no sudden decision. And this is one part of the contrast between the external aspect of his sin, and that of Judas; the latter went on in comparative obscurity to the end of his course, but we are able to trace each succeeding step of the gradual progress of the Roman governor; and it is the clearness and distinctness of the marks which they have left, that render his history in the inspired volume so full of practical lessons to ourselves.

In the first place, we read in St. John's Gospel, that after an ineffectual attempt to persuade the chief priests to take the responsibility on themselves, Pilate went into the judgment-hall, to question privately our blessed Lord, as he was thus compelled to examine Him. He there asked Him "whether He were the King

of the Jews¹." "Jesus answered him, Sayest thou this thing of thyself, or did others tell it thee of Me?" Now it is remarkable that the question would really seem to have been his own; for the chief priests had as yet brought forward no specific charge. But as though the words had struck some hidden chord in the heart of Pilate, he is led by them at once to disclaim all personal interest in the trial. "Am I a Jew?" he exclaimed; "Thine own nation, and the chief priests, have delivered Thee to me; what hast Thou done?" "Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world;" and presently once more addressing Himself to the secret thoughts of Pilate, He added, "I came into the world to bear witness to the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth My voice." Doubtless this warning also found an echo in the breast of Pilate. His own heart told him that it was not his Gentile origin, but his dread of truth which made him shrink

¹ John xviii, 31.

from the doctrine of our Lord. But he had recourse to a new subterfuge. "What is truth?" he asked, implying that it was a question on which the Jews themselves were at variance; and which it was, therefore, impossible for him to decide. And anxious to avoid any further reply, he hastened away from the presence of our Saviour.

He was probably disappointed at the result of the interview. It must have increased his former scruples, and yet had failed to afford him the courage to act upon them. So he resolved on a middle course;—to satisfy his conscience, he pronounced our Saviour innocent; and then, as though He were guilty, appealed to the people, and proposed to release Him, in accordance with the custom of granting a free pardon to some criminal at the feast of the Passover. But this temporizing expedient did not remove his difficulty; the tide of popular feeling, on which he relied for support,

had suddenly changed; the same multitude, who on the Monday had shouted Hosanna, and throughout the week had listened gladly to the teaching of our Saviour, were now clamorous for His death; and Pilate found it impossible to shelter, as he had wished, an act of justice under the plea of mercy.

He next had recourse to a half measure; he took our Blessed Lord, and scourged Him, and delivered Him over to his soldiers, to be mocked and buffeted; he then led Him forth, in the hope that he might thus have satisfied the malice of His accusers; and at the same time, to quiet his own conscience, repeated his conviction that He was innocent. But this expedient was as unsuccessful as the former. It merely brought Pilate himself one step further on his fearful journey, without leading either the priests or the people to meet him on the way. They would accept of no compromise, but expressly demanded the crucifixion of our Saviour. The Roman governor

still went on advancing; "Take ye Him," he said, "and crucify Him, for I find no fault in Him;" as though he were now willing that the deed of bloodshed should be committed, provided only his own name were unconnected with it.

At length the chief priests brought forward a specific charge: "We have a law," they said, "and by our law He ought to die, because He made Himself the Son of God." But the accusation only served to increase the apprehension of the Roman governor. "When Pilate heard that saying, he was the more afraid²." There was something in it which harmonized with the secret tenour of his own thoughts; and it set before him in a stronger light than ever the awful character of the responsibility he was about to incur. He therefore once more went into the judgment hall to commune in secret with Him, who seemed thus mysteriously to be placed in his power.

² John xix. 8.

To his first question, "Whence art Thou³?" our blessed Lord vouchsafed no reply: but when he added, with reference to himself, "Speakest Thou not unto me? knowest Thou not that I have power to crucify Thee, and power to release Thee?"—the voice of warning was again addressed to Him. "Jesus answered, Thou couldest have no power at all against Me, except it were given thee from above; therefore he that delivered Me unto thee, hath the greater sin." These words would seem to have given a momentary life and energy to the wavering purpose of the Roman governor. We read that from "thenceforth Pilate sought to release Jesus." But when he went forth to carry this purpose into effect, the Jews cried out, saying, "If thou let this man go, thou art not Cæsar's friend⁴." And the still small voice of conscience was suppressed and deadened by the popular cry. Doubtless, he inwardly felt that his

³ John xix. 9, 10, 12.

⁴ Ibid. xix. 12.

power was given him from above, but there were also earthly interests connected with it, which he was reluctant to abandon; and with his mind in this divided state, he at length constrained himself to sit down on the judgment-seat, and consent to the public trial of our Lord.

We have hitherto followed the narrative of St. John; but it was probably at this period that an incident occurred which St. Matthew alone has recorded. Even while he was thus closing his ears and hardening his heart, one more shadow was thrown across his path to warn him of his danger. "His wife sent unto him, saying, Have thou nothing to do with that just man, for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of Him ⁵." The words must have come to him almost as a message from Heaven, for none could have been in more exact accordance with his own secret fears. He knew that our Blessed

⁵ Matt. xxvii. 19.

Lord was "a just man," and it was his earnest desire to have "nothing to do" with His condemnation. He would very gladly, therefore, have complied with the letter of his wife's request, but he shrank from the sacrifice which a compliance with its spirit would involve.

Yet one last hope of escaping the dreaded responsibility still remained. It appeared in the course of the trial, that our Lord's teaching had extended to Galilee, and as this placed Him under the jurisdiction of Herod, he endeavoured to transfer the decision to him. Now the character of Herod differed widely from his own. He was so far from being troubled by our Lord's presence, that when he saw Him, he was exceeding glad : the rumour of His miracles had long since reached him, without awakening any deeper feeling than that of curiosity in his mind ; there was no inward conflict, as there had been in that of Pilate; and it was probably for this cause that our Lord, Who had en-

couraged by repeated warnings the doubts and misgivings of the one, would vouchsafe no answer at all to the idle questioning of the other. Herod grew angry at His silence, and at length, as it would seem in mere wantonness, and without a thought of the awful guilt he might be incurring, he, with "his men of war, set Him at nought, and mocked Him, and arrayed Him in a gorgeous robe, and sent Him again to Pilate ⁶."

Still, however, the Roman governor took advantage even of this treatment to declare publicly, that the opinion of Herod confirmed his own; for he said, "I sent you to him; and, lo, nothing worthy of death is done unto Him. I will therefore chastise Him and release Him ⁷." But the eagerness of the people was only rendered the more uncontrollable by each subterfuge and delay: "they were instant with loud voices requiring that He might be crucified; and the voices of them and of the chief priests

⁶ Luke xxiii. 11.

⁷ Luke xxiii. 15.

prevailed ; and Pilate gave sentence that it should be as they required." Yet before he did so, as though his mind were to the very last moment torn by conflicting emotions, and he felt its guilt, and was anxious that others should bear the responsibility of a deed which was his own, we read that "he took water and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just person ; see ye to it ⁸."

And now let us pause, and dwell briefly on the character of Pilate, his sin and its consequences, in order that we may perceive the more clearly the practical warning which they convey.

First, as regards his character. Its peculiar features appear the more marked when we contrast them with those of other wicked men, who, living at the same period, were in some degree exposed to a similar trial. He was not, as I have already said, like Judas ; for while the one

⁸ Matt. xxvii. 24.

had from whatever motive embraced the Gospel privileges, the other studiously shrank from the responsibility which they involved. He was not like Herod the Great, who dared to massacre all the children at Bethlehem, in the hope that he might destroy the infant Jesus; on the contrary, Pilate never once molested Him during the whole course of His ministry. Neither was he like the other Herod, who made our Lord's miracles and teaching the subject of mere curiosity; nor again, like the deputy Gallio, "who cared for none of those things:" there were deeper, if not better, thoughts in the breast of the Roman governor. Far more nearly did he resemble Felix, when he trembled at the reasoning of Paul "on righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come⁹." But he differed from Felix in the position in which he was placed; the convenient season for which he would fain have gone

⁹ Acts xxiv. 25.

on waiting, was forced suddenly upon him, and he strove in vain to set it aside. His was, in truth, a character which under ordinary circumstances slowly and imperceptibly becomes worse as it gathers more and more of the world's alloy. He did not wish to seem a decidedly religious, nor yet to be a decidedly wicked man. There were earthly interests to withhold him from the one; there was the voice of conscience to cause him to tremble at the other. His desire was to follow a safe path which would involve no self-sacrifice, and yet lead to no deliberate act of sin. But this, as we have seen, was in his case impossible. He loved darkness rather than light; but on the morning of Good Friday the light shone full and clear before him, and the shadows lengthened, and his minutes became as years. Satan took advantage of it to hurry him along; and thus the excuses, weaknesses, subterfuges, and evasions, which might otherwise have been scattered through a long life of pro-

crastination, were all crowded into a single day.

But some one may ask, was not the sin of Pilate lessened because it was thus, in a manner, forced upon him, and thus reluctantly performed? I answer, that it was the choice which was forced upon him, and not the sin. It was the privilege which God gave him; the making it a blessing or a burthen was his own. Nay more, —his tender and scrupulous conscience, his very indecision of purpose, his awe at our Saviour's presence, no less than the answers vouchsafed to him, and the dream of his wife, were talents sent by the same God who had placed in his hands the power of life and death: they are so far from diminishing his guilt, that each and all will add to the account against him at the day of judgment. Surely it can be no excuse for his weakness and wavering that his better thoughts were strengthened as by a warning from Heaven; neither is his fall the less fearful because the hand of

our Lord Himself was more than once held out for his support.

Moreover, when we look to what may be called the punishment of the sin of Pilate, it seems especially designed to impress this warning upon us. We cannot indeed follow him beyond the grave, but I speak of the memorial which has been left of him upon earth,—the stain of blood that has been clinging to his hands from that very hour in which he professed to wash it away. It is surely a very remarkable point in his history, that, notwithstanding all his efforts to avoid it, his name should have been thus inseparably connected with the death of our Saviour. His pleas, his scruples, his subterfuges and professions, have all passed away like shadows; and we find in the Creed the plain and simple record of his crime. Not only the martyrs and confessors of the Church, but every member of every Christian congregation, nay, even little children, who are scarce conscious of the

meaning of the words which they employ, go on pronouncing their daily sentence of condemnation against Pontius Pilate. It seems like the view which God took of his share in the crucifixion of our Lord; the awful record that has been set down against him in the book that will be opened at the day of judgment.

In conclusion, let us consider briefly the practical warning to be derived from the history of Pontius Pilate. And first, as to the class of persons to whom it more especially applies. I have spoken of the contrast between his character and that of Judas Iscariot; but there is one point of resemblance between them. If we except their final act of sin, neither of them were, as the world would judge, wicked men. Very far otherwise: Judas had left all to follow Christ; Pilate made many sincere efforts to deliver him from the malice of his enemies. And even after their final act, both alike shrank from the guilt which they had incurred by it. "I

have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood," was the confession of Judas when he restored the money; "I wash my hands of the blood of this just person," the corresponding declaration of Pilate. There is so much in the history of both which makes a fair show, that if it were not for the strong light which Holy Scripture has shed upon it, we might perhaps regard them as an example rather than a warning, during the greater part of their career. Thus then they neither of them speak so directly to the open and profligate sinner, as to those whose consciences are yet tender, and who, being unmarked by any great crime, seem to be discharging faithfully the duties of their calling. But while they agree in this, they may be said to divide this class between them; the example of Pilate applying more immediately to the laity, as that of Judas did to the clergy; the one, to those who have avoided all external professions, the other, to those

who have made them; the one to society generally, the other to what is often called the religious world. Of course I do not mean by this, that any Christian can really occupy the same position as Pontius Pilate. Our choice has been made once for all in baptism. We have been placed within the Gospel covenant; we may break through it, if we will; we cannot, like Pilate, now for the first time refuse to enter it. But this only renders our state the more fearful, if in our feelings and conduct we resemble him.

Now there are many conscientious, upright, and honourable men, who are only anxious to pursue a safe path in the journey of life. They are afraid of being over religious; there are holy thoughts and stirrings of the spirit within them, which, if indulged, would force them to act differently from those with whom they live. And for this reason they suppress them. They persuade themselves that the actions to which they lead do not

necessarily lie within their own sphere of duty, and that therefore they are at liberty to let them alone. It is to these that the warning of Pilate most directly applies. For so also did he keep to his own safe path when all Judæa was moved by the fame of the miracles of our Lord. And if they resemble him in the nature of the talents which they hold, if either from their wealth, or rank, or intellect, God has placed in their hands the destinies of others, we may find a yet more exact parallel. Alas, how often in the pages of history, though written in less distinct and awful characters, do we read again and again the warning of Pontius Pilate. How often when some popular tumult or question of state policy forces men to come forward and take their part, do we perceive in the struggles of those who seem to befriend the Church, only the miserable haltings of the Roman governor. The same attempts to shift the responsibility on others, the same disavowals of

all personal interest, the same abstract questioning, the same gradual yielding to popular demands, the same commission of the less to avoid the greater wrong, the same inconsistencies between word and action, and, too often, at length the same deliberate abandonment, not only of those higher interests which it has been their endeavour to suppress, but also of those plain and clear dictates of conscience which in the beginning they did not hesitate to avow.

Nor is it to these alone that the warning of Pilate applies. The choice of others may be less sudden and public;—nay, as I before observed, it is very rarely crowded into a few short hours, it for the most part extends itself slowly and painfully through a long series of years;—but some such trial there must be until the decision of each of us, however lowly, has been made. The poor as well as the rich, the sick and infirm even more than those who take part in the duties of active life, little

children as well as grown-up men, will all in their appointed course be called upon, like Pontius Pilate, to make their choice. Even this holy season has perhaps brought to us some portion of our trial. It may perhaps have set more vividly before us sins and negligences which we thought not of before; and when we again go forth from our Lord's presence, we shall either have to act on our new feelings and resolutions, or to evade them by some half measure, or to seek some subterfuge to set them aside. Let us remember then, if it be so, that though this trial may not be our last, it will undoubtedly leave us better or worse than when it came; it will advance us one step further on the road to heaven or hell.

Lastly, I will advert to one particular point in which the warning of Pilate fills up that which was wanting in the warning of Judas—I mean with reference to the Holy Communion; for as the latter spoke to the unworthy communicant, so does the

former to those who habitually turn aside from that Heavenly Feast. There are many who refuse to partake of it simply on account of the privileges which it conveys; they believe, and rightly believe, that these privileges may either bring with them a blessing or a curse, and for this cause they are anxious to set them aside. They do not pronounce themselves either good or bad, but avoid all self-examination; and, if at times doubts and misgivings should arise, they suppress them by the hope that they are not really less righteous, but more scrupulous than their neighbours, and merely shrink from a responsibility which others venture to incur. Now such persons are at best only following the footsteps of Pontius Pilate, along the path in which he walked during the whole ministry of our Lord. Nay, it may be truly said that they resemble him in the awful choice which he this day made; for by them, as by him, the responsibility has been incurred already; the blessing or the burthen has

been forced upon them. When the invitation has once been given them by our Blessed Lord, they must either accept it or reject it, they cannot really set it aside. They have indeed escaped the sin of Judas, who as a guest without a wedding garment partook of the heavenly feast; but their names will be written among the number of those for whom the supper was prepared, and who yet refused to come.

Easter Eve.

THE EVENTS OF EASTER EVE.

“Now the next day that followed the Matt.xxvii.
day of the preparation, the chief priests 62—66.
and Pharisees came together unto Pilate,

Saying, Sir, we remember that that de-
ceiver said, while he was yet alive, After
three days I will rise again.

Command therefore that the sepulchre
be made sure until the third day, lest his
disciples come by night, and steal him
away, and say unto the people, He is risen
from the dead: so the last error shall be
worse than the first.

Pilate said unto them, Ye have a watch :
go your way, make it as sure as ye can.

So they went, and made the sepulchre
sure, sealing the stone, and setting a
watch.”

Luke xxiii. “And [the women which came with him
56. from Galilee] rested the sabbath day, ac-
 cording to the commandment.”

LECTURE VII.

THE DAY OF REST.

LUKE xxiii. 56.

“ And rested the sabbath day according to the commandment.”

ST. MARK is altogether silent concerning the events of Easter eve—the fifteenth chapter closes the narrative of the Friday; at the commencement of the sixteenth, the sabbath is spoken of as already past. St. John is silent also. The account of St. Matthew occupies but five verses, and that of St. Luke but a few words. The former tells us of the anxiety and restlessness of the scribes and Pharisees; the latter of the resignation and obedience of the faithful

followers of Christ. And this is all that we read in Holy Scripture of the vigil which we now commemorate. The Second Lesson appointed for the morning and the Gospel, brief as they are, contain more than the complete narrative of the day.

What a contrast does this silence afford to the long, minute, and heart-stirring accounts of the events of yesterday. Our Church has, as it were, spread them out through the services of the whole week. Hitherto the occurrences of each particular day have been omitted, in order that the crucifixion itself may be brought continually before our eyes. It is as though mourner after mourner had passed by, first St. Matthew, then St. Mark, then St. Luke, and last of all the beloved Apostle, St. John; each walking along the same path; each raising his finger, and pointing slowly to the cross; and each in his own voice and words giving the same solemn warning of the price that was paid for the redemption of mankind.

I do not think that any one could really enter into the Church services for Passion Week without being conscious of a marked change on Easter eve : we seem to breathe more freely now that the oft-repeated narrative of the crucifixion is at an end, and we feel that a day of comparative rest, a Sabbath day, has arrived.

Such, also, do I believe to have been the spirit that this day breathed on the little flock which our Saviour left upon earth. It was given to them to collect their thoughts ; to recover from their alarm ; to weep quietly for their Lord ; to repent their momentary desertion of Him ; to love Him more and more because He was gone ; to feel that there was a dreary blank without Him ; to remember all He had said and done ; to meditate on His mysterious promises ; to hope that in a little while He would be with them again ; to pray, as He had taught them, for the coming of His Kingdom ; to gaze on the precious ointments which they had pre-

pared for His body; to resolve very early in the morning to hasten to His tomb.

Thus it was that the holy Apostles "rested on the Sabbath day according to the commandment." Very different from this quiet trustfulness was the state of those who had taken part in the death of our Lord. There is, indeed, one of them whom we can no longer watch; Judas Iscariot is already gone to that place which Holy Scripture calls his own, where there is neither rest nor hope, but the worm that never dies, and the fire that is not quenched. The contrast between him and the eleven, with whom he used to be walking day by day, is in truth a most awful one. He has placed an impassable gulf, for all eternity, between himself and his Saviour; while the rest are only parted from Him for a few short hours by the feeble barrier of the tomb. It is not, however, of Judas that I would now speak, but of the chief priests and the Roman governor. They would appear, on this

day, to have exhibited all the alarm and disquietude of sin. Although a night had passed since the deed was done, and there had been no uproar among the people, and every thing seemed quiet, and though it was the Sabbath-day, they could not rest. They were apprehensive of the morrow. When they had asked for a sign from Heaven, our Lord had mysteriously spoken of the sign of the prophet Jonas; and afterwards had explained His words by saying, that "as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly, so, also, would the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth'." It was this prediction that haunted them now: to-morrow was the third day, and they half feared that it might give birth to the promised sign. Such was the secret cause of their uneasiness; but they did not confess it; nay, perhaps they were not even aware of it themselves. Their consciences had become so hardened,

¹ Matt. xiii. 40.

that it is possible they did but speak the truth, when they told Pilate they were afraid lest the disciples should come by night and steal Him away. Yet how unreasonable was such a fear! We know that there was no ground for it, for the disciples were resting the Sabbath day according to the commandment; but had it been otherwise, with what object could they have stolen the dead body of their Lord? Such a fraud must have brought with it its own punishment. Their affections could have no resting-place save beyond the grave; for if in this life only they had hope in Christ they were of all men most miserable. The chief priests, however, thought not of this; they were conscious of a sense of insecurity, and imagined their minds would become more tranquil if a guard were placed over the tomb. Had they analyzed their own feelings, they might have discovered that the vision, which disquieted them, was not of the future but of the past. It was, in

truth, the restlessness of guilt, which imagined more to be required only because far too much had been already done.

Pontius Pilate also was not without his misgivings. We find him still shrinking from all responsibility, and endeavouring, as yesterday, to follow a safe path. He did not, on the one hand, point out to the Chief Priests the folly of their apprehensions, neither, on the other, did he altogether accede to their request. He simply resolved to avoid all personal interference, and leave the matter in their own hands. "Ye have a watch," he said, "go your way, make it as sure as ye can." And though it was the Sabbath day, and that Sabbath was a high day, still the guilty priesthood went their way, and themselves made the sepulchre sure, sealing the stone and setting a watch. Such is the description that St. Matthew has given us of the doubts and plottings of Pilate and of the chief priests, while our Lord was resting in the tomb; for "the wicked are like the trou-

bled sea when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt²." It is very refreshing to turn away from it to the quiet picture of St. Luke, and watch the little group of faithful disciples, whose tranquillity is in harmony with the day; who, in spite of the stirring events of the preceding week—in spite of their desire to anoint the body of Christ—in spite of all their love and their sorrows, and their hopes and their fears—are but "resting the Sabbath-day, according to the commandment."

And yet the peculiar feature of this Sabbath day was, at the time, concealed both from them and the chief priests, though it is seen very clearly when we look back upon it now. It was the last time that they would be bound to observe the letter of the commandment, the last typical Sabbath, the last commemoration of the deliverance of their forefathers from the bondage of Egypt;—the morrow would accomplish a fresh deliverance, and conse-

² Isaiah lviii. 20.

crate a new day. God the Father had rested from the work of creation when the long train of Sabbaths began; God the Son was now resting from the work of redemption, and so bringing them to a close. One day in seven would indeed still be kept holy; but it was to be a different day, and to be kept holy in a different manner. It was to be a day at once of spiritual rest and of spiritual joy. The full light of the Easter sun would from this time forth be reflected upon it, and not merely those shadows which had been but the forerunners of its approach.

There is something very solemn in the contemplation of the last Jewish Sabbath. We think of it as just surviving to form the vigil of the first festival of the Christian year; we think of it as hallowing the rest of our Saviour in the tomb, and giving its quiet and grateful shade to the sorrow of his faithful disciples, until the dawn of that day in which its shelter would no longer be needed by them.

They "rested the Sabbath day;" and their rest was unbroken, even by the thought that it was the last sabbath on which they would be thus commanded to rest.

But there is another, no less solemn, and more awful thought, connected with this last Sabbath. The priests and rulers who disturbed its sanctity did not know that it was the last. Nay, so noiselessly was the privilege which they abused withdrawn from them, that their descendants to the present hour have not yet discovered that it is gone. Saturday after Saturday is observed by them still. But how unlike are these to the seventh days of rest which used to shed their blessing on the Holy Land. Not only has the inward principle of life departed from them, but even their external peace and sanctity is at an end. They are but the withered leaves which once might have protected the blossom and the fruit, but can do so no more. We should wonder that they have not been swept away by

the storm—nay, rather that during the long desolate winter they have not of themselves fallen to the ground—did we not know that our Saviour's curse was resting upon them, and that therefore they cannot die. The root of the tree has been dried up; but they are still left clinging to the boughs, to remind us that the fig tree at Jerusalem once had leaves as green and beautiful as our own.

Let us now proceed to the practical application of the thoughts suggested by Easter eve.

I. The last Jewish Sabbath reminds us of the period when our own fasts and festivals will be brought to a close; for though we believe that the Lord's day will now continue unchanged, even to the end of the world, yet is there another and a more perfect rest which remaineth beyond it for the people of God. There will be a last Lent and a last Easter to the Church upon earth; they will, like the last Jewish Sabbath, be profaned by some and observed by others; and on the morrow be

succeeded by a new festival—the second advent of Christ.

2. If, however, we pass from the day itself to the priests and rulers who were profaning it, Easter eve repeats again the warning which was more or less brought before us by the first four days in the Holy Week. As on Sunday we were reminded that the same blessings would not be always with us, and on Monday that the day of our visitation might be drawing to a close, and on Tuesday that our Lord might be purifying our hearts for the last time, and on Wednesday that He might come when we looked not for Him, and ask us for our fruit; so also does Saturday teach us, that though we know it not, our own last Lent and last Easter may be passing now. In another year they may be altogether withdrawn from us by death; or even if we live on till the same seasons return, it is possible that from henceforth to our hearts their life and reality, like that of the Jewish Sabbath, may be at an end. They will per-

haps, if we neglect their present warnings, only cling to us hereafter as withered leaves, without bringing back the spiritual emotions which we now feel, or the privileges which we now enjoy.

3. But it is when we turn to the little group of faithful disciples that we read the lesson which harmonizes best with the quiet spirit of Easter eve. The other days have given rise to stirring thoughts, while they have warned us of the danger of delay, and the necessity of at once forsaking our sins, and seizing our present opportunities, and availing ourselves of our privileges, and resolving with our whole heart and soul to follow Christ. But when all this has been done, Easter eve speaks to us of prayer and watchfulness, and patient tarrying, when our Lord seems to have left us; and of keeping to the very letter of His commandment, although it force us to remain in a state of inactivity, and hinder our zeal to do Him service. This is a warning which becomes especially necessary when the Holy Spirit

has awakened thoughts of real sorrow and contrition in our hearts. Satan then plies us with new temptations. We mourn over the opportunities that we have lost, and he bids us invent others for ourselves; we know that we have been standing idle too long, and he urges us to hasten onward by forbidden paths; we are conscious that our prayers are cold and our hearts dull, and that we do not realize the presence of Christ, and instead of making this a reason for waiting quietly till the hour of darkness has passed by, Satan tells us to seek to dispel it by unreal excitement, or haply to leave altogether the Church in which our lot has been cast. When then such feelings of restlessness are busy within us, let us think of the devout women and the holy Apostles during the time they were forsaken by their Lord. Our most earnest longings cannot be compared with theirs. They had lost Him by whose side some of them had been walking day after day for three successive years. In the moment of His

peril they had deserted Him, and now they were left alone to mourn their error, and to wish to prove their penitence by paying the last honour to the dead body of our Saviour. They had cause to dread lest the bitter animosity of the chief priests might on the morrow have taken it away. Their spices and ointments were prepared, and every hope, wish, and affection would lead them at once to hasten to his tomb. There was one thing alone to hinder them. It was their Sabbath, and the commandment to make it the day of rest, had not as yet been withdrawn; and their simple obedience to this command is the only record that has been left of them on Easter eve. "They rested the Sabbath day according to the commandment." Of a truth, "in returning and rest were they saved, and in quietness and confidence was their strength³." They were content "to tarry the Lord's leisure⁴," and were afterwards strong because He comforted their hearts.

³ Isaiah xxx. 15.

⁴ Ps. xxvii. 16.

May we have grace to follow their example! But let us remember, that we cannot expect to do so if we endeavour to follow it in this alone. We must first strive to resemble them in our obedience to the call of Christ, in our listening to His precepts, in our watching the signs of His presence, in our walking by His side in the daily duties of life. And then, whensoever the hours of darkness come—and we mourn for our sins—and our privileges are withdrawn—and we have few opportunities of doing good—and it seems as though our Lord had forsaken us—and our path is lonely, and our heart sad—we may be able to check every feeling of impatience and despondency by the remembrance of Easter eve, while, after having prepared our spices and ointments of good resolutions for the morrow, we think of those who, as at this hour, “were resting the sabbath day according to the commandment.”

Easter Day.

THE VISION AT THE HOLY SEPULCHRE.

“IN the end of the sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, ^{Matt. xxviii.} 1—8. came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulchre.

And, behold, there was a great earthquake: for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it.

His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow:

And for fear of him the keepers did shake, and became as dead men.

And the angel answered and said unto

184 THE VISION AT THE HOLY SEPULCHRE.

the women, Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified.

He is not here: for he is risen, as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay.

And go quickly, and tell his disciples that he is risen from the dead; and, behold, he goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see him; lo, I have told you.

And they departed quickly from the sepulchre with fear and great joy; and did run to bring his disciples word."

See also Mark xvi. 1—8.

Luke xxiv. 1—9.

John xx. 1—10.

LECTURE VIII.

THE SIGNS OF OUR LORD'S PRESENCE.

MATT. xxviii. 5, 6.

“And the angel answered and said unto the women, Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified. He is not here: for he is risen, as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay.”

At the dawn of this day, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to the holy sepulchre, and were greeted with the joyous welcome, “Fear not ye.” Some indeed had been there who had good reason for alarm. For, as we read, “behold, there was a great earthquake;” and “the

angel of the Lord descended from Heaven. . . . His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow; and for fear of him the keepers did shake, and became as dead men." They were not allowed to profane by their gaze that hallowed ground. But it was not thus with the faithful Marys. They had come to seek for "Jesus, Which was crucified," and therefore they had no cause for fear. It was true that He was not there; He had risen: but the voice of the angel invited them to come in, and see the place where He had been.

If our object be the same as their's, we may now venture to stand with them as at the entrance of the holy sepulchre, and meditate on the signs of the presence of our Lord. It is not a day for many words, or a continued narrative, or close reasoning. It is too bright and joyous, too full of thankfulness and love. We will rather think, wonder, and be grateful. We will keep on saying to ourselves

again and again, "This is the day which the Lord hath made, we will rejoice and be glad in it¹." There shall be no more of doubt or sorrow, but only great joy mingled with holy fear. We will be as little children, holding up to the light the treasure that we have found, and feasting our eyes upon its dazzling brightness. And as little children also, we will listen to the gladdening welcome, which the voice of the angel offers to ourselves.

There is no need, in order to do this, to follow the steps of the holy women to the actual tomb of Christ. We cannot with them see the great stone that has been rolled away from the door, and the bright light shining within, and the holy angels in their snow-white raiment, who encompass it around. But there is a vision of spiritual blessedness which greets us everywhere on the morning of Easter-day. If we seek Jesus which was crucified, the world in which we live becomes to us as

¹ Ps. cxviii. 24.

the holy sepulchre. It was once the abode of death; but His brief sojourn in it has filled it with life and freshness, and made it a meet dwelling-place for celestial beings. It is true that we must not rest our affections upon it, or, like the disciples, we shall seek the living among the dead. But like them we may pause before we depart, and look around on the signs of the presence of our Lord. All things in this our sepulchre are now full of Christ. Whatever joys or sorrows befall us, they are but as memorials of his love. Whatever be our condition of life, it is as the place where He has lain. And though He be no longer there, "He is risen," nay, rather, "He is ascended," as He said; bright is the light which now shines upon it from the Heaven to which He is gone.

Let us then first consider the different conditions of life.

Are you poor and destitute—without home, perhaps, and without friends;—or have you in any way a more than ordinary

share in the afflictions of the world? You have but to seek Jesus which was crucified, and you will rejoice in the blessedness of your lot. The state of poverty is in a peculiar manner hallowed by His presence. In your outward circumstances you are walking step by step at His side. You may find Him in every want and every care. The world may seem sad and lonely, but there is One who will never leave you nor forsake you. It is true that you cannot see Him, save with the eye of faith. But at this you should rejoice the more. While upon earth He had not where to lay His head; but in His Father's house are many mansions; and He is gone there to prepare a place for you.

But perhaps, on the contrary, you are very rich, and therefore have no part in the blessings that the Gospel promises to the poor. Still you may go to the dwellings of sickness, hunger, and distress; and if you really seek Jesus that was crucified, you will find Him there. Yours is the

privilege of feeding Him in His hunger, giving Him drink in His thirst, clothing Him in His nakedness, and ministering to Him when He is sick. For in that you do so to the least of His brethren, you do so to Himself. And because "He is not here, He is risen," the riches which you consign to Him upon earth He will keep for you in Heaven. Thus then even the perishable gold of this our sepulchre may be so changed by the presence of our Lord, that it will become a treasure which neither moth nor rust can corrupt, nor thieves break through and steal.

But let us pass from outward circumstances to inward feelings.

Are our hearts full of heaviness from a remembrance of the week that is past? It was meet that they should be so. But if we are seeking Jesus which was crucified, we may lay aside our doubts and fears. A week of joy and comfort is dawning upon us now. Last Sunday we listened in sorrow to the tidings that our

Lord would not be always with us. It was as on that day that He spoke them, and they were in unison with the events of His approaching passion. But view them by the light of the Easter sun, and they are words of sorrow no more. The voice of an angel has proclaimed their truth, and yet changed them for us into tidings of joy. Our Lord will not be always with us, for "He is not here;" but again, "He is risen," and therefore He will be always with us now. For three brief days He was taken away, in order that for all eternity He might remain. It is as though a single shadow were left by the side of His tomb, to point out the more strongly the brightness that reigns around. "For Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over Him. For in that He died, He died unto sin once; but in that He liveth, He liveth unto God. Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but

alive unto God, through Jesus Christ our Lord¹."

Are we heavy laden with the burthen of our former sins, and do we tremble lest all our resolutions of amendment should pass away at our first contact with the world? Still, if, like Mary, we come in humble faith to seek Jesus Which was crucified, Easter-day has its store of blessing for us. It cheers us with the hope, not only of pardon for the past, but of sustaining grace for the time to come. The same Lord "Who was delivered for our offences was raised again for our justification²." Let us trust in His aid, and we shall walk in safety through whatever trials encompass our path. "If God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, shall He not with Him also freely give us all things³?" "Who" then "shall lay any thing to the

¹ Rom. vi. 9. ² Rom. iv. 25. ³ Rom. viii. 31, 32.

charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth; who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, *yea rather that is risen again*, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us⁴."

Oh, how very bright and glorious is our Easter sun! There is no part of our sepulchre that is unenlightened by its ray; we pass in a moment from the night of mourning to the day of comfort, from the seedtime of tears to the harvest of joy, through the grave and gate of death to the resurrection of the dead.

Let us look around us once more. Have you children that you love? Go then, and watch the new light that is shining upon them now. Did not our Lord when on earth take little children in His arms? did He not put His hands upon them, and give them His blessing? Childhood was the one spot in the sepulchre on which

⁴ Rom. viii. 33, 34.

our Lord best loved to dwell. You may forget then to-day, that they are the children of this world, born to earthly pleasures, earthly occupations, earthly sorrows, and earthly sins. Regard them only as having been once for all baptized into the death of Christ; and then in their affection for yourself, in their love of God, and in their hope of Heaven, go "see the place where the Lord lay."

Have you friends for whom you mourn? Yesterday you might have approached them with a sad uncertain step; for though quiet was their sleep, it was but the shadow of the cross that then rested on their grave. But to-day, the bright sun of Easter is shining also upon them, and theirs and yours is the sure and certain hope of the resurrection of the dead. If they sleep with Christ, their sepulchre, like his, is in a garden⁵ now. Oh! sow it plenteously with holy thoughts, for it is in truth a kindly soil for faith, and hope, and love,

⁵ John xix. 41.

and each spotless desire, and heavenly affection of the heart. To be with them this day is to be with Christ. You may then approach even the chambers of death itself, as though the voice of an angel summoned you there to "come, see the place where the Lord lay."

But let us cease to count over our blessings and privileges, in order that we may at once receive the greatest blessing, the highest privilege of them all. Let us no longer go far away to seek the distant signs of our Lord's presence, while we have been invited to that holiest place in which He Himself may most clearly be discerned. "Christ our passover is sacrificed for us; therefore let us keep the feast, not with the old leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth⁶." Come, ye who seek Jesus Which was crucified, fear not ye, but approach the pledges of His love, and the memorials of His death. It

⁶ 1 Cor. v. 7.

is true that He is not there: He is risen: but though risen, He is still spiritually there. Yesterday, indeed, there was a great stone at the mouth of the sepulchre, and a seal was set upon it. We passed it by in silence; we were afraid to invite you then. For how could the Church on earth sing her triumphal hymn in the day of her exile from her Lord? But now the seal has been removed, the great stone has been rolled back from the door. The Lord is risen—He is risen indeed. “Now are we bound to praise God for the glorious resurrection of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord: for He is the very paschal lamb Who was offered for us, and hath taken away the sin of the world; Who by His death hath destroyed death, and by His rising again hath restored to us everlasting life. Therefore with angels and archangels and with all the company of Heaven, let us laud and magnify His glorious name⁷.” The Lord is risen—He

⁷ Communion Service for Easter Day.

is risen indeed. Why then do ye any longer tarry? Nay, if ye be among the number of those who during the past week mocked Him, scourged Him, reviled Him, and crucified Him; if ye be as Judas, who betrayed Him, or as Pilate, who condemned Him; then indeed have ye cause for fearfulness and alarm; well may ye hasten hence, and close your eyes to the signs of His death, the tokens of His resurrection from the dead; well may ye try with the chief priests to force yourselves to believe that He is not risen at all,—that His disciples came by night and stole Him away. But if in very truth during the past week ye have been seeking “Jesus Which was crucified,” fear not ye. Come, listen to the joyous greeting of the angel. With an humble and thankful heart, with a glad yet reverent step, with great joy and yet with holy fear, “Come see the place where the Lord lay.”

1

Easter Monday.

THE JOURNEY TO EMMAUS.

(ON EASTER DAY.)

“AND, behold, two of them went that same day to a village called Emmaus, which was from Jerusalem about three-score furlongs. Luke xxi
13-35.

And they talked together of all these things which had happened.

And it came to pass, that, while they communed together and reasoned, Jesus himself drew near, and went with them.

But their eyes were holden that they should not know him.

And he said unto them, What manner of communications are these that ye have one to another, as ye walk, and are sad?

And the one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answering said unto him, Art thou only a stranger in Jerusalem, and hast not known the things which are come to pass there in these days?

And he said unto them, What things? And they said unto him, Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, which was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people:

And how the chief priests and our rulers delivered him to be condemned to death, and have crucified him.

But we trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel: and beside all this, to day is the third day since these things were done.

Yea, and certain women also of our company made us astonished, which were early at the sepulchre;

And when they found not his body, they came, saying, that they had also seen a vision of angels, which said that he was alive.

And certain of them which were with us went to the sepulchre, and found it even so as the women had said: but him they saw not.

Then he said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken:

Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?

And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself.

And they drew nigh unto the village, whither they went: and he made as though he would have gone further.

But they constrained him, saying, Abide with us: for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent. And he went in to tarry with them.

And it came to pass, as he sat at meat with them, he took bread, and blessed it, and brake, and gave to them.

And their eyes were opened, and they

knew him; and he vanished out of their sight.

And they said one to another, Did not our hearts burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures?

And they rose up the same hour, and returned to Jerusalem, and found the eleven gathered together, and them that were with them,

Saying, The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon.

And they told what things were done in the way, and how he was known of them in breaking of bread."

LECTURE IX.

THE REMEDY FOR ANXIOUS THOUGHTS.

LUKE xxiv. 35.

“ And they told what things were done in the way, and how he was known of them in breaking of bread.”

DURING the past week, each day was marked by its own distinct history. But we have no corresponding record of the events of Easter Monday and Tuesday. Our Lord, after His resurrection, was no longer seen daily teaching in the temple: He manifested Himself to none but His own disciples, and to them only at certain intervals of time, and not with the same familiar intercourse as before.

It is on two of these manifestations that I propose to dwell in this and the following Lecture. One of them occurred on Easter-day itself, the other on the following Sunday. The practical subjects that I would connect with them, are the remedy for anxious thoughts, and comfort under despondency. They will give birth to reflections in harmony with the present festivals; for they lead us to the consideration of the anxious thoughts and despondency of the faithful followers of Christ; and their heaviness endured but for a night, the Easter sun shone brightly upon them, and joy came to them in the morning. We may then now, as on Easter eve, seek in their trials some foreshadowing of our own, that so when our hearts are sad within us the remembrance of their example may support and cheer us on our way.

The words of the text refer to our Lord's manifestation of Himself to the two disciples on their way to Emmaus. Their

feelings may be regarded as representing those of the disciples generally on the morning of Easter day: while those of St. Thomas seem marked by an individual character, which will form the subject of a separate Lecture. Let us then, in the first place, consider the nature of the trial to which all alike were exposed. The quiet Sabbath was now past, and they were called upon to go forth again to the ordinary occupations of life. Now we all know the trial that such a call brings with it after the death of one whom we have loved. It forces us to realize the change that has come over us, and so awakens us to the full consciousness of our loss; and this portion of the burthen of affliction must have weighed very heavily on the Apostles of our Lord. The whole complexion of their life had been changed by His crucifixion. He had been the object, not only of their best earthly affections, but of their hopes beyond the grave. Since their call their time had been passed in watching His

miracles and listening to His teaching. Thus their daily employment had ended with His death; and no new path of duty had as yet appeared to them. Neither was this all: their awakening was not merely from the stupor caused by grief. On the night of our Lord's betrayal, an hour of darkness, like a cloud from the spiritual world, had rested upon their hearts. Satan had been permitted for a little while to overshadow them with feelings of mistrust and terror, which must afterwards have appeared unaccountable, even to themselves. And now, though these feelings had passed away like a dream, and the day of rest had been given them to compose their thoughts, still the remembrance of them must have rendered yet more dreary the prospect which the morning of Easter opened to their view. They had forsaken their Lord before He had finally left them: and this burthen on their memory might well give rise to many grievous questionings. They could not tell

what privileges they had forfeited by their own voluntary act of desertion. It might be in consequence of it that He was hiding His face from them for a time: nay, it might be that they had lost all claim upon His affection, and that He would return to them no more.

We will now pass on from their trial itself, to their conduct under it; and the manner in which relief was afforded them. In doing so, I will follow verse by verse the narrative of St. Luke, for we shall find that every incident recorded there conveys some clear and practical lesson to ourselves.

First, let us observe their employment. They were going, as it would seem, on an ordinary journey to the village of Emmaus; but on their way thither "they talked together of all these things which had happened¹." We may gather from this that they neither gave way to sinful com-

¹ Luke xxiv. 13, 14.

plaints or repining, nor sought to escape from their anxiety in the stir and business of life. They opened their griefs to one another, and dwelt quietly upon them. The future was indeed full of perplexity, but they were able to look back stedfastly on the past. There at least they had a sure resting-place, and there they were content to linger, until God in His own good time should guide them onward to the truth.

It was while they were engaged in this holy conversation, that our Lord "Himself drew near, and went with them," though "their eyes were holden, that they should not know Him." Even in this circumstance taken by itself we may discern a spiritual meaning. They were sincere in their desire to learn the truth, and therefore their Saviour was at hand. They had not to go out of their way to look for Him; they found Him in the beaten track along which they walked. He "drew near and went with them." He was their companion, though they

knew Him not. He was listening to their words, and had compassion on their sorrow. "And He said unto them, What manner of communications are these that ye have one to another, as ye walk and are sad? And the one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answering said unto Him, Art thou only a stranger in Jerusalem, and hast not known the things which are come to pass there in these days? And He said unto them, What things²?"

How improbable did it seem that this apparent stranger should afford them the relief which they sought. They might almost have regarded Him as an intruder on their grief. He appeared to be ignorant of all that had happened, and more anxious to receive than to impart information. But for this very reason, it was a clear duty to reply to His question, and so, as far as they were able, to bear witness to the truth. And they were con-

² Luke xxiv. 15—19.

tent to discharge this duty without looking beyond.

It is from the narrative which they told the stranger that we gather the exact nature of their own hopes and fears.

They still speak of "Jesus of Nazareth" as "a Prophet, mighty in deed and word before God and all the people." On this point their faith had undergone no change. But their hope that He had been the Redeemer of Israel, they refer to as a thing past. For the Jews had rejected His teaching, and put Him to death; and there had been no sign of the promised redemption, though this was "the third day since these things were done." Yet a ray of comfort had already appeared; for certain women had been early at the sepulchre, "and had seen a vision of angels, which said that He was alive." And other disciples who had gone there in consequence of this report, found it to be as the women had said, "but Him they saw not³." These last

³ Luke xxiv. 19—24.

words give the reason why, notwithstanding this new hope, they continued to be perplexed and sad. If their Lord had risen, it in one way only increased their feeling of loneliness and desertion. To themselves had been vouchsafed no pledge of His forgiveness, no certainty of His resurrection. His tomb was empty,—angels said that He was alive,—but His own disciples saw Him not. It was as though the light which had shone for a moment in the distance made them but feel the more deeply the darkness of the path in which they walked.

Let us now proceed to the relief afforded them. We may observe that our Lord's first words contain a reproof. "Then He said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken: ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into His glory?" Their anxious thoughts were but a sign of their own infirmity. God had not hidden the truth from them. The

Scriptures might have afforded them the comfort which they sought. It was no new revelation that they required, but only that their eyes might be opened to read that which had been already given. But their ignorance was not that of presumption. They were earnest in their desire to learn the truth, and therefore listened gladly to the stranger's words. The rebuke was forgotten in the deeper thoughts to which it gave rise. And their hearts burned within them, while "beginning at Moses and all the prophets, He expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself⁴."

Thus then the channel through which our Lord conveyed His instruction was His own written word. He shed light on passages long familiar to them, and their perplexity was at an end. But their sadness must, in part at least, have still remained. The stranger had in no way

⁴ Luke xxiv. 25—27.

revealed to them Who He was: nay more, when "they drew nigh unto the village whither they went, He made as though He would have gone farther." He had joined them, as it would seem, accidentally, and now it was for them to decide whether He should remain with them or not. But the hope of further instruction, the feeling of hospitality, and the secret yearning of their own hearts, all prompted them to constrain Him to stay. They therefore did not suffer Him to depart. "Abide with us," they said, "for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent. And He went in to tarry with them ⁵."

And now at length we come to the time and manner of our Lord's actual manifestation. It was in perfect harmony with all that had preceded it. Their faith had been strengthened, and their minds prepared for the reception of Christ by meditation on His passion, by the study of the Scriptures in an humble spirit,

⁵ Luke xxiv. 28, 29.

and by the quiet discharge of ordinary duties ; but it was, as it were, through the ordinance which He Himself had appointed that they finally became conscious of His presence. For "it came to pass as He sat at meat with them, He took bread, and blessed it, and brake, and gave to them. And their eyes were opened and they knew Him ; and He vanished out of their sight. . . . And they rose up the same hour, and returned to Jerusalem. . . . And they told what things were done in the way, and how He was known of them in breaking of bread ⁶."

Such is the narrative of the journey to Emmaus. The absence of any display of miraculous power, our Lord's unobserved presence, and the gradual change it wrought, not so much in the visible course of events, as in the thoughts and feelings of the two disciples, render it the more analogous to His daily intercourse with

⁶ Luke xxiv. 30—35.

ourselves. Let us then now consider, one by one, the lessons that it affords us.

We all have our times of perplexity and sorrow—I am not now speaking of those whose natural disposition is one of despondency, but of Christians generally;—there are few who have never been conscious of “an hour of darkness,” a season in which they have a peculiar sense of spiritual loneliness and desertion, and which is followed by distressing doubts and troubles, similar to those which the disciples felt after the crucifixion of their Lord—I say similar, for of course they cannot be the same; their future has become our past; we can now speak of Christ’s resurrection, no less than of His life and death, as among the things that have already happened;—but we may resemble them in the bitter recollection of our own temporary desertion of Him, the uncertainty of His forgiveness, and the fear lest He should be hiding His face from us for ever.

If it be so, let us not seek an escape

from our sadness, by driving religion altogether from our thoughts, and endeavouring to lose ourselves in the cares and pleasures of life. But rather let us strive, step by step, to follow the two disciples in their quiet journey. Let us meditate on all our Saviour has done and suffered for us, and the gracious promises that He has given us; and we may rest assured, that though our path seem solitary, He is never really far from us: He can read our thoughts, even now He is asking us why we are sad. Let us only walk quietly on, and in a little while, under the light of His presence, each doubt and anxiety will pass away.

But though, on the one hand, we must not try to forget our sadness, yet neither must we indulge it to the neglect of practical duties. It is in the discharge of these that our Lord most frequently meets us. He comes, as He did to the two disciples, to ask for that assistance, which He Himself is ready to afford. He assumes the

form of the little children that we instruct, the sick that we visit, the poor to whom we minister, or even the stranger that we receive; so that the simple performance of these offices brings with it a blessing upon ourselves. Sometimes a chance look or word gives us the relief that we seek; but oftener still we are merely conscious that during the employment our own feelings have undergone a change, and can give no reason for it, except that, in accordance with His promise, our Saviour has been there.

Again: we must endeavour to be like the two disciples in their full assurance of the power of their beloved Master, and their readiness to bear witness to the truth. Nay, our faith should be far stronger than theirs, for our trust that it is He, and He alone, Which has "redeemed Israel," is one that cannot pass away. But while we are at all times willing to give a reason for the hope that is in us, we must resemble them also in

the humility with which we receive the instruction that we need. Let us never forget, that whatever doubts and sorrows we may feel, they must be the consequence of our own infirmities and sins. Enough is revealed in Holy Scripture to make our way clear before us; and if at any time we be in darkness, the reason is, not that the Church of Christ can ever be without light, but that our own eyes are closed, and we are unable to discern it. It is our own folly and slowness of heart which prevents our receiving all that Moses and the prophets, nay more, all that the Evangelists and Apostles have written for us. We must bear to feel this, and (if God will) must bear to be told it also. And in this spirit we must approach the study of the Holy Scriptures, under the guide appointed to explain to us their meaning.

Again: we are warned by the journey to Emmaus, that though God is pleased to place opportunities in our daily path, the act of retaining them must be our own.

In whatever form our Saviour comes to us, He will merely accompany us for a little while, and then make as though He would go farther. Let us remember that every holy thought, and every good resolution, is a messenger from Him. When our hearts burn within us, it is a sign that He is talking with us by the way. But such thoughts and resolutions merely join themselves to us for a little while; they come indeed in the first instance unbidden, but should they prove unwelcome guests, they are ready in an instant to go away: nay rather, it requires an effort on our part to keep them. To be indifferent or irresolute is in truth to suffer them to depart. If we really wish them to abide with us, we must of our own will recall them, and constrain them to stay.

To conclude. We have seen how our Saviour may be with us in the daily walk of life;—we have seen that He is with us when we meditate on His passion;—with us when we show charity to our

brethren ;—with us when we have faith in His power;—with us when we bear rebukes with patience;—with us when we study with meekness His written word ;—and that He abides with us when we cherish the better thoughts which His Holy Spirit has put into our hearts. Such is now His ordinary intercourse with His disciples: He meets them in their own familiar paths, and they must ask for no miracle to convince them of His presence. And yet, besides all this, there is still a special manner in which He vouchsafes to manifest Himself to us, a means of grace which He has appointed to be, so to speak, the very channel of our receiving Him; and this also is typified in the narrative that we have now been following. It was not until “He took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to them,” that the eyes of the disciples were opened, and they knew Him. Their whole journey seems, as I have said, to have been but a preparation for its closing scene. So also must

our daily life, with all its duties, its trials, and its privileges, be but a preparation for the Holy Communion. Although our Lord be always with us, yet if we seek Him not there, we exclude ourselves from the consolation of His Presence. For it is there, in the words of our Prayer-book, that "we spiritually eat the flesh of Christ, and drink His blood;" that "we dwell in Christ, and Christ in us;" that "we are one with Christ, and Christ with us." There it is that He makes His face to shine upon us, and gives us comfort in our sorrows, rest from our troubles, and pardon for our sins. We cannot, indeed, tell how He then manifests Himself to us, any more than we can tell the manner of His manifestation to the two disciples at Emmaus. We merely read that their eyes were opened and they knew Him. Let then our prayer be that the eyes of our understanding may in like manner be opened, and that we may feel in our Communion the presence of Christ. But

do not let us forget that we must first of all approach them, as they did, by the path of quiet obedience, with a remembrance of His death, trust in His promises, and hearts burning with His love. If we fail in this, we cannot wonder at the blessing being withheld from us which was vouchsafed to them. In the language of the text, we must strive to resemble them "in the things done in the way," or we have no reason to hope that our Lord will make Himself known to us "in the breaking of bread."

Easter Tuesday.

OUR LORD'S APPEARANCE TO ST. THOMAS.

(ON THE FIRST SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.)

“ BUT Thomas, one of the twelve, called ^{John xx.}
Didymus, was not with them when Jesus ^{24—29.}
came.

The other disciples therefore said unto him, We have seen the Lord. But he said unto them, Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe.

And after eight days again his disciples were within, and Thomas with them: then came Jesus, the doors being shut,

and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you.

Then saith he to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing.

And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God.

Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed."

LECTURE X.

COMFORT UNDER DESPONDENCY.

JOHN xx. 27, 28.

“Then saith he to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing. And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God.”

THERE was an interval of one week between the manifestation of our Lord to the disciples on their way to Emmaus and that to which the text refers. It must have been a period full of the brightest hopes and expectations to the rest of the Apostles; but St. Thomas had been un-

able to partake of the general feeling of joy. The doubts and sorrows which had passed away from others upon Easter-day still continued to throw their shadow upon his mind. *They* were glad because they had seen the Lord; *their* hearts were calm and tranquil, because His peace was resting upon them. St. Thomas had but heard the tidings from his fellow-disciples, he had missed the sunshine of his Saviour's presence; and therefore he could not realize the blessing that it had brought; and his faith wavered, and his heart was sad.

I propose in the present Lecture to dwell upon the trial of St. Thomas, with a view to its practical application to ourselves. Of course, while we do this, it must be with all humility and reverence; for we speak of one of that blessed number who will hereafter sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. But as St. Peter is at times a warning, no less than an example, to the

hopeful and eager, so also is St. Thomas to persons of an opposite character. His peculiar features, as we find them in the Gospel, would seem to be those of gloom and despondency. He is twice individually mentioned by the Evangelist St. John during our Lord's ministry. To a cursory view, these two notices seem unconnected, nay almost inconsistent, with one another. But if we regard them as symbols of this frame of mind, we perceive a kind of harmony between them, and trace the gradual development of the same feeling that afterwards led him to disbelieve the resurrection of Christ.

The first of them occurs when our Lord proposed to go to Jerusalem, immediately before the week of His passion. There would seem at this period to have been an unusual feeling of apprehension among His disciples. They believed His life to be in danger from the animosity of the Jews. Doubtless also His own solemn forewarnings of His approaching sufferings

and death had not been without their effect. When, therefore, He said to them, "Let us go into Judæa again¹," the universal answer was, "Master, of late the Jews sought to stone Thee, and goest Thou thither again?" But when His purpose still remained unchanged, it was St. Thomas who first came forward to set the example of self-devotion. He said to his fellow-disciples, "Let us also go that we may die with Him²." It was as though the season of sadness and depression had called him forth. St. Peter was eager to lay down his own life in defence of that of his Lord. St. James and St. John were willing to drink of the cup that He drank of, and be baptized with the baptism that He was baptized with, while they looked forward to the bright prospect of sitting on His right hand and on His left in His kingdom. But it was the privilege of St. Thomas to propose to walk

¹ John xi. 7.

² Ibid. xi. 16.

quietly by his side along the path of suffering. He did not say, "Let us die *for* Him," but "*with* Him." Neither do his words dwell on a reward beyond the grave. His mind would seem to have rested on the thought of sharing the same death with his beloved Master.

The second direct allusion that we have to St. Thomas occurs on the very night of our Lord's betrayal. The words of consolation, "Let not your heart be troubled," which open the 14th chapter of St. John, followed by the gracious assurance, "Whither I go ye know, and the way ye know," would seem peculiarly addressed to the state of feeling of this Apostle. Accordingly, it was St. Thomas who replied to them, "Lord, we know not whither Thou goest, and how can we know the way ³?" There appears to be a contrast between his reply on this occasion and on the former; but it is the very contrast that we should expect from the

³ John xiv. 5.

change of circumstances that called it forth. When the journey was to lead to death, St. Thomas was ready in a moment to follow his Lord. But now that He would have turned the thoughts of His disciples to the home beyond the grave, and spoke of going to prepare a place for them, and coming again and receiving them to Himself, the words found no answering note in the heart of that Apostle; they were out of harmony with his natural disposition, and there was doubt and perplexity in his answer. Thus one and the same frame of mind probably led to his former devotion and his present distrust. Sorrow was familiar to him; therefore He had said, "Let us also go, that we may die with Him." But hope came to him as a stranger; and his only reply to the voice of consolation was, "Lord, we know not whither Thou goest, and how can we know the way?" The words become the more striking when we contrast them with those of St. Peter, which had

immediately preceded them. When our Lord had said to him, "Whither I go thou canst not follow Me now, but thou shalt follow Me afterwards," his answer had been, "Lord, why cannot I follow Thee now? I will lay down my life for Thy sake⁴." We may observe, that the same occasion, and almost the same promise, led the one Apostle to self-confidence, the other to distrust.

Now if this view of the character of St. Thomas be correct, it throws much light both on his trial and his conduct after the resurrection of our Lord. We are told that he was not with the other Apostles on Easter day. And even this circumstance, for which no reason is assigned, may perhaps have been connected with his peculiar state of feeling: I mean that a habit of despondency naturally leads to the love of solitude. Persons who labour under it imagine their own suffer-

⁴ John xiii. 36.

ings to be so distinct from those of others, that it is in vain to look to them for sympathy. We cannot, however, tell whether this were the case with St. Thomas; we merely know the fact that he was absent, and that afterwards, on his return, he refused to believe the glad tidings which he heard. He found all the brethren "glad," because "they had seen the Lord^s;" but in despite of their united testimony he persisted in his sorrow. They proclaimed Christ risen from the dead; but the image of Christ crucified was the only one that presented itself to his mind. We find it in the very evidence that he required: "Except," he said, "I shall see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into His side, I will not believe."

For one week our Saviour suffered him to drink alone the bitter draught which

^s John xx. 20.

he had chosen ; and fearful indeed during that period must have been the trial of St. Thomas. No temptations from without are to be compared to those from within, which proceed from the feeling of spiritual loneliness and desertion : and no darkness is so terrible as even a passing cloud of infidelity to a mind that really loves the truth. But holy Scripture has not withdrawn the veil from this portion of the history of St. Thomas. We read nothing of his struggles, his sorrows, and his prayers. This however we know, that during his week of trial, he continued true to the Apostolic fellowship, and did not fall back upon the world ; and that, when at the end of that time, our Lord had compassion upon him, and vouchsafed him the very evidence that he sought, the heart of the Apostle was not unprepared to receive Him ; there was no unwilling belief, no questioning on the future, no reasoning on the past. Every doubt was dispelled in a moment by his Saviour's presence. His

spirit, which had been so long pent up in solitude, now overflowed with love, gratitude, and devotion. "Thomas answered and said unto Him, My Lord and my God."

Such is the record which St. John has left of St. Thomas the Apostle. We may, I think, infer from it, that his general character was one of despondency. But whether this be so or not, it is at least certain that he is twice brought before us in the Gospel as using the language of despondency, and that during the week following our Lord's resurrection he suffered a like trial with those who labour under that infirmity; and this will be enough for those practical lessons, with a view to which I have considered his history. Let us now pass on to them, and consider him—first as our consolation—secondly, as our warning—and thirdly, as our example.

1. First, then, we learn from St. Thomas, that feelings of gloom and despondency are in themselves no proof of alienation from

God. They may be the effect of our natural character, or they may be sent for a term to make trial of our constancy; but from whatever cause they proceed, they need not tempt us to despair. We may cheer ourselves with the reflection that the path we tread is marked by the footsteps of an Apostle of our Lord. His was the hard trial of a sorrow with which his brethren could not sympathise, and doubts which they were unable to remove. We, like him, may feel weary and heavy-laden under our solitary burthen; we may imagine that our Saviour has left us, that we know not how to come unto Him, and that we shall never more be cheered by the consolation of His presence: but it does not follow from this that we are really cut off from His love. Our gloomy thoughts, our doubts and fears, may hide us from ourselves, but they cannot hide us from the compassion of our Lord. If only we be anxious to come to Him, He will guide us step by step through the obscurity that surrounds us. We may

say "Peradventure the darkness shall cover us," but "our night shall be turned to day;" for "the darkness is no darkness with Him, but the night is as clear as the day, the darkness and light to Him are both alike⁶;" nay more, "though we walk through the valley of the shadow of death," we need "fear no evil; for even then He is with us, His rod and His staff comfort us⁷."

2. But though feelings of despondency are not in themselves sinful, the indulgence of them is dangerous. They are a temptation as well as a trial; and just as excess of eagerness tends to presumption, so does excess of sadness to despair. This is the warning that we gather from the different passages in which we find mention of St. Thomas; they are separated from one another by only a few days in point of time, and we may trace in them the gradual progress of a habit of despondency. His first words are those of devo-

⁶ Ps. cxxxix. 10, 11.

⁷ Ib. xxiii. 4.

tion, his next of distrust, his next of faithlessness; and though he was not suffered finally to fall away, his sin of infirmity brought with it its own punishment. He was not only left for a time without the consolation of his Lord's presence, but even afterwards was warned that he had chosen a less instead of a greater blessing. Jesus said unto him, "Thomas, because thou hast seen Me, thou hast believed; blessed are they that have not seen and yet have believed ⁸." Let us then take heed, lest a continual feeling of depression imperceptibly become a snare to us, and tempt us to unbelief. God will send us afflictions, if they be good for us, but we must bear them with a cheerful and contented spirit. To "rejoice in the Lord ⁹" is one part of the duty of a Christian. Should our natural disposition be inclined to sadness, we must endeavour to overcome it; nay, rather to graft upon it the promises of the Gospel, and be at once,

⁸ John xx. 20.

⁹ Phil. iv. 4.

"as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing¹⁰." When the prospect around us seems to us to be dark, we must pray for grace to walk by faith, and not by sight: so shall we inherit a higher blessing than if the darkness were taken away.

3. Thus may we, with all humility, regard the holy apostle, St. Thomas, both as our consolation and our warning, but it is on the example which he affords us that it is most expedient for us to dwell. He is in a peculiar manner our guide along the path of despondency. First, we must strive to resemble him in our devotion to Christ: "Let us also go," he said, "that we may die with Him." So also should our sorrow make us willing to die to the world, that we may cling the more closely to our Lord. Again, whatever doubts may arise in our minds, let there be no wish to shrink back from His service, but let our only fear be lest He should leave us, our anxious prayer that we may have

¹⁰ 2 Cor. vi. 10.

strength to follow Him. Again, in all our trials and troubles, let us, like St. Thomas, fix our thoughts stedfastly upon Christ crucified. Do not let us say within ourselves, If He will give me honour, or riches, or do some great thing for me, I will believe on Him. But rather let us meditate on His cross and passion, and desire only to be allowed, as it were, to touch His wounds, and thrust our hand into His side, that we may not be faithless but believing.

Lastly, we must remember that it was not while St. Thomas was alone that our Lord manifested Himself to him, but that he had joined the other disciples at the first weekly festival of the resurrection. His feelings must have been very different from theirs; but he did not on that account go away from them, and choose for himself some solitary path. In this also he is our example. Let not our secret sorrows lead us to forsake the gathering of ourselves together; but

rather let them render us the more frequent in our attendance at the house of God. We cannot tell how great a blessing we may forfeit each time that we stay away. Our Saviour has promised, that where two or three are gathered together in His Name, there is He in the midst of them. Let us then seek Him day by day in the congregation of His saints. If it be His love that draws us thither, it matters not with what other feelings we may come. Let us bring with us our sorrows, that He may comfort them; our doubts, that He may dispel them; our sins, that He may forgive them. He will make His face to shine upon us, and breathe into our souls the blessing of peace. Oh, happy are they whose only anxiety proceeds from their earnest desire for His presence, for He never fails to come to those who really seek Him! Oh, happy are they whom the path of affliction is leading to the Cross of Christ, for in a little while He shall fill

them with hope and gladness through His resurrection from the dead! "He that now goeth on his way weeping, and beareth forth good seed, shall doubtless come again with joy, and bring his sheaves with him ¹." "Why," then, "art thou so full of heaviness, O my soul, and why art thou so disquieted within me? O put thy trust in God, for I will yet give Him thanks, Which is the help of my countenance and my God ²!"

¹ Ps. cxxvi. 6.

² Ib. xliii. 5, 6.

THE END.

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